2023 READERS POLL RESULTS

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SEPTEMBER 2023

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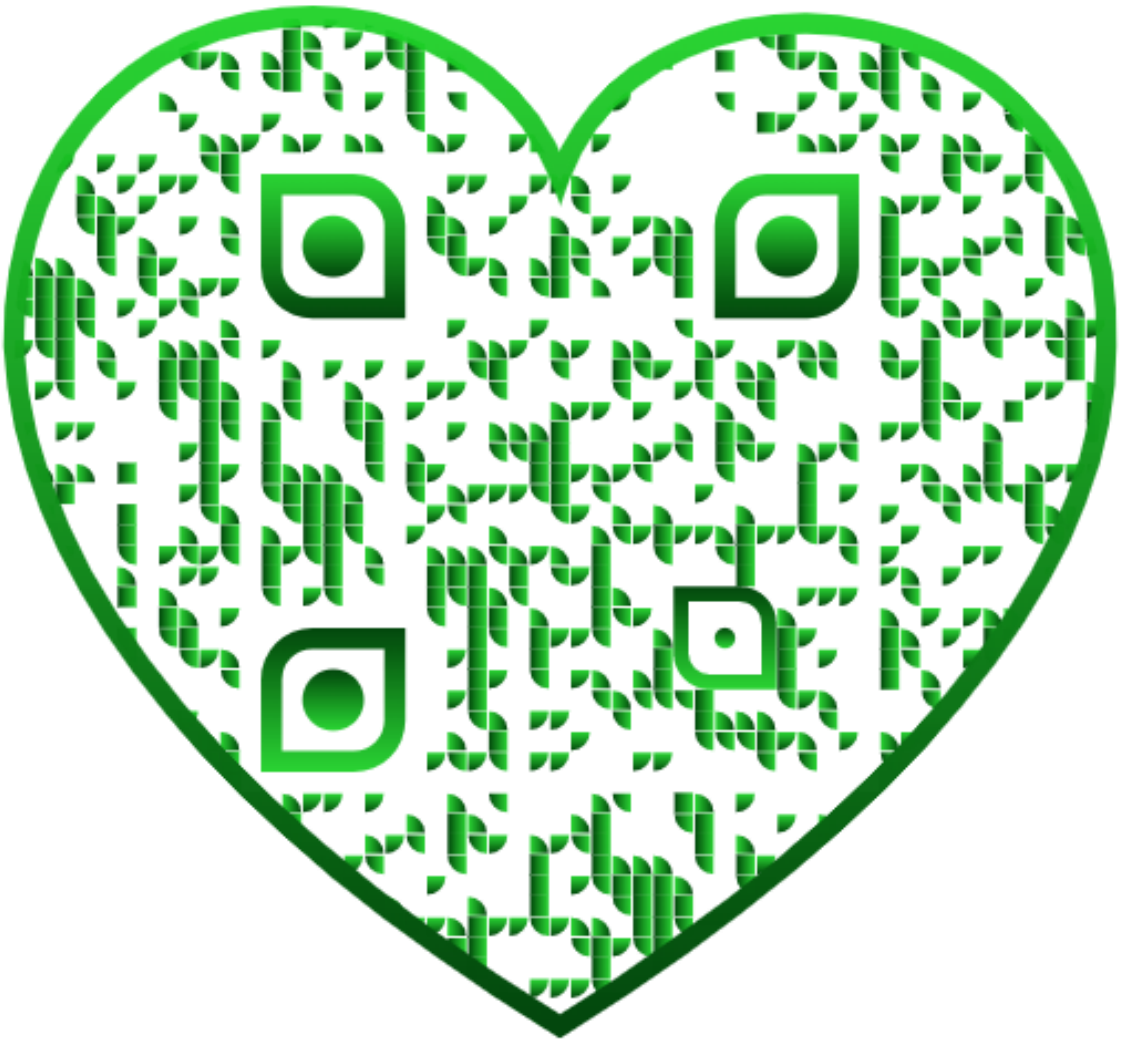

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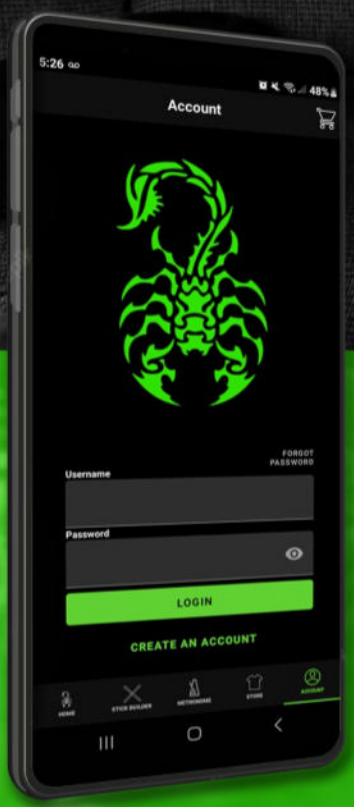

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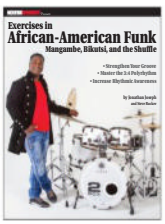

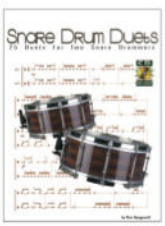

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Old and New

Firstly, NO, I'm not calling anyone "old!" However, it is possible that no issue of *Modern Drummer* portrays the idea and the relationship of old and new, better than this month's issue. What more can be said about Max and Jay Weinberg, they simultaneously represent music of the past, music of today, and music of the future. It was fun to spend time with both of them while talking (and learning) about old and new music, drummers, ideas, and philosophies. I was left with the thought that maybe some things in life are just timeless, and are *neither* old or new.

The 2023 Modern Drummer Readers Poll is always an interesting study of old and new. We see that the future of drumming is in very good shape with younger drummers like Elijah Wood, Sarah Jones, CJ Thompson, Paulina "Pau" Villarreal Velez, and Kristina Rybalchenko, and with the work The School of Rock is doing with younger musicians around the country. We can also notice a mighty appreciation and respect for the musical present and past through the poll winners that have had long careers like Gregg Bissonette, Giovanni Hidalgo, Chad Smith, Peter Erskine, Questlove, Mike Portnoy, Dave Weckl, Travis Barker, Thomas Lang, Steve Smith, and Dave Grohl.

A special congratulations goes out to the newest Modern Drummer Hall of Fame inductee, the legendary Alex Van Halen. His name has come up in countless recent Modern Drummer interviews as a drumming inspiration for both younger and older drummers of today. For drummers that came up during the 70s and 80s we all agree that Alex Van Halen is the Ringo Starr of *our* generation. He had (and HAS) it all: The instantly identifiable and creative drum parts, the playing on the hits, the iconic drumsets, the sense of groove and swing, and the personification of everything that is rock and roll. We all thank you Alex, and I (personally) hope that we all get to hear more of your amazing drumming.

Old and new, young and old, no matter how you say it, drumming and music is constantly blurring the lines between them, and I love that! I just listened to James Europe's 369th Infantry "Hell Fighters" Band (recorded in 1919) and the new Mammoth WVH CD (recorded in 2023) back-to-back in the same sitting. I also appreciate both generations of Weinberg drummers, Kristina Rybalchenko, Questlove, and Alex Van Halen, and *everyone* in between.

Old, new, young, old… *Who Cares!*

Mark Griffith
Editor-in-Chief, Director of Content

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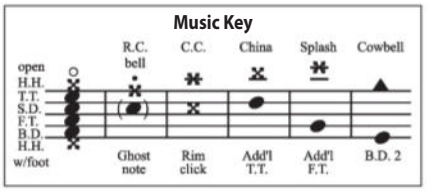

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Dave Sundeen's Custom Kit

This month's Kit of the Month comes from Dave Sundeen from Random Lake, Wisconsin. He is the drummer for the Milwaukee based bands Shelly Mack and The ReUnion and Sucker Punch. This is a custom made kit that was built for Shelly Mack and The ReUnion. It consists of the following: an 18 x 22 kick; 8 x 10, 9 x 12, 14 x 14, 14 x 16 toms; and a 5.5 x 14 snare. Dave's cymbals are, Paiste PST8 and Zildjian S series. He uses a LP Cowbell, Meinl hi-hat tambourine, Tama Iron Cobra Double Kick Pedal. Everything is mounted on an Alesis rack with Gibraltar hardware, Dixon 709 Stands, and a Dixon Hi-Hat stand. Dave's sticks are ProMark 747 Neil Peart Signature sticks, and the custom drum wraps are courtesy of Custom Drum Design.

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Drumming for the Brain:

Unlocking the Neurological and Psychological Benefits of Rhythmic Therapy

By Karl Sterling with Peter Erskine

I've known this month's guest columnist Karl Sterling for just about as long as I've been a professional drummer (fifty years ago his parents used to bring him to gigs when I was the drummer for Stan Kenton). A former career drummer for 35 years, Karl transitioned from being a drummer to becoming a therapist, he brings authentic knowledge and voice to the benefits of drumming. In his own words:

"The past 14 years in the neurorehabilitation field has been amazing, especially when we examine how the brain can change itself through mindful training and exercises. I haven't performed a live gig in 10 years, but found that bringing drumming into my clinical setting (via my nifty set of Roland E-drums) offers ample opportunities to help people in countless ways - gait, symmetrical stride, and movement in general. Coordination skills transfer outside of playing drums (even if the patient is a horrible drummer) into activities of daily living. We also find that cognition, reaction time, and memory skills generally improve as well. Best of all, it's FUN! The beauty of it is - ANYONE can benefit from drumming. No diagnosis is needed. ALL brains can benefit …"

Karl, you and science have come a long way. I'm proud to be associated with you.

— **Peter Erskine**

Music has been an integral part of human culture since time immemorial, transcending linguistic barriers and connecting people on a profound level. Among various musical expressions, drumming stands out for its primal rhythm, capturing the essence of human existence. Beyond its cultural significance, scientific research has begun to unveil the profound benefits of drumming for the brain. In this comprehensive article, we will explore the neurological and psychological advantages of drumming, understanding how this ancient art form positively impacts cognitive functions, emotional well-being, and overall brain health.

The Neuroscience of Drumming

To comprehend the benefits of drumming for the brain, it is essential to delve into the neuroscience behind this rhythmic art. When individuals engage in drumming, they create intricate patterns and synchronize movements, stimulating multiple brain regions simultaneously. This synchronization connects both hemispheres of the brain, fostering increased communication between neurons and promoting neuroplasticity - the brain's ability to reorganize and adapt.

Neuroplasticity plays a crucial role in cognitive development, as it enables the formation of new neural pathways and strengthens existing connections. By exploring the effects of drumming on the brain, we can unlock its potential to enhance cognitive abilities and mental well-being.

COGNITIVE ENHANCEMENT THROUGH DRUMMING

Memory and Learning

Drumming requires memorization of complex patterns, rhythms, and sequences, making it an excellent cognitive workout for memory. Regular drumming practice can improve memory retention and recall abilities, contributing to enhanced learning capacities.

A study published in the *Psychology of Music* found that children who received drumming lessons demonstrated improved verbal memory and learning skills compared to non-musical peers.

Attention and Focus

Drumming demands concentration and focus to maintain rhythm and execute precise movements. As individuals become immersed in the rhythmic patterns, their attentional capacities improve, leading to enhanced focus in various aspects of life. Researchers from the University of Miami discovered that drumming could increase attention levels and reduce distractions in children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Problem-Solving and Creativity

Drumming encourages improvisation and creative expression, fostering problem-solving skills and stimulating the brain's creative centers. The rhythmic patterns and improvisational nature of drumming offer a unique opportunity for cognitive flexibility.

A study published in the journal *PLOS ONE* indicated that drumming enhances divergent thinking, a critical aspect of creativity. Participants engaged in regular drumming sessions displayed a greater ability to generate creative solutions to problems.

STRESS REDUCTION AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

The Release of Endorphins

Drumming triggers the release of endorphins, the brain's natural feel-good

chemicals. These endorphins act as powerful stress reducers, alleviating anxiety, depression, and tension. A study published in *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine* revealed that participants who engaged in group drumming sessions experienced a significant reduction in stress and improved mood.

Emotional Expression and Regulation
Drumming provides a safe and expressive outlet for emotions. The act of striking a drum can help release pent-up emotions, allowing individuals to channel their feelings positively. Group drumming sessions, in particular, can be effective in promoting emotional expression and regulation. A study published in the *Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama, and Sociometry* found that group drumming was beneficial in enhancing emotional openness and connecting with others.

Anxiety and Depression Relief
Regular drumming practice has shown promise in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. The rhythmic nature of drumming induces a meditative state, calming the mind and promoting a sense of inner peace. A study published in the journal *Complementary Therapies in Medicine* demonstrated that participants who engaged in a ten week drumming intervention experienced significant reductions in symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Motor Skills and Coordination Improvement
Drumming requires precise motor coordination, as individuals must strike the drums with specific timing and intensity. Regular drumming practice can significantly enhance both fine and gross motor skills, leading to improved coordination. Researchers from Harvard Medical School found that drumming can strengthen the brain's motor cortex and improve overall motor performance.

Boosting Brain Connectivity
The rhythmic nature of drumming activates the brain's corpus callosum, the bundle of nerve fibers connecting the brain's hemispheres. As a result, communication between the brain's left and right sides is enhanced, leading to improved overall brain connectivity. In a study published in *Brain Connectivity*, researchers used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to demonstrate that drumming can strengthen connections between brain regions responsible for auditory, motor, and emotional processing.

DRUMMING AS A THERAPEUTIC TOOL FOR NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Parkinson's Disease
Drumming has shown promise as a complementary therapy for individuals with Parkinson's disease. The rhythmic stimulation helps improve gait, balance, and motor functions in patients with this neurodegenerative disorder. A study published in *PLOS ONE* reported that drumming interventions improved fine motor skills, walking speed, and overall quality of life in individuals with Parkinson's disease.

Stroke Rehabilitation
Drumming has also been explored as a therapeutic tool for stroke survivors. The rhythmic movements and coordination required in drumming can aid in regaining motor functions and promoting neuroplasticity. A study published in *Topics in Stroke Rehabilitation* demonstrated that stroke survivors who participated in a drumming program experienced improvements in upper limb function and overall motor recovery.

Boosting Immune Function
Engaging in drumming has been linked to improved immune system function. The stress-reducing effects of drumming, combined with its positive impact on emotional well-being, contribute to an overall boost in the body's immune response. A study published in the journal *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* revealed that drumming interventions resulted in enhanced immune responses and a reduction in stress-related hormones.

In the end, drumming transcends cultural boundaries, offering a plethora of cognitive, emotional, and neurological benefits. From enhancing memory and problem-solving skills to promoting emotional well-being and reducing stress, drumming proves to be a transformative art form for the brain. Its potential as a therapeutic tool for neurological conditions such as Parkinson's disease and stroke opens new avenues for medical interventions.

As we deepen our understanding of the brain's remarkable adaptability, drumming emerges as a powerful tool to nurture cognitive development and mental well-being. Whether you're an experienced percussionist or a novice eager to explore the rhythmic world, embracing drumming can lead to a harmonious and healthful journey for your brain and mind alike. Let the rhythm guide you towards unlocking the healing power of drumming for your brain, enriching your life with its profound benefits.

Karl Sterling is the CEO of NeuroMotor Training LLC, and the author of *Parkinson's Regeneration Training Book*.
www.karlsterling.com

Check out Peter's drummer profile page, and get a copy of his Legends book at moderndrummer.com

NEW and NOTABLE

Pearl and Drummer Dennis Chambers Create New 10-over 8 Signature Snare.

To be truly great, one must evolve over time. Drumming legend Dennis Chambers took this to heart when considering the transformation of his snare drum sound. Designed for sonic evolution, the new Pearl Dennis Chambers Signature Snare drum employs the multi-lug design of his previous Signature model, with ten single swivel tuning lugs on the batter side, and eight on the snare side for top-end tonal focus.

The real difference comes with its SR300 Multi-Timbre Strainer that features three individually tunable six strand snappy wire snares. Each can be engaged or disengaged to further sculpt the sound of the drum. "I got this idea from the Pearl Symphonic series snare drum," Dennis admits. "I fell in love with the idea of having three different snare settings on one drum." Pearl's durable Mastercast Die-Cast Hoops also add weight for increased projection.

Features include the 4-ply Maple with 4-ply Re-Ring shell of his original Signature model, Evans G12 batter and snare heads, and a Matte Black lacquer finish for visual versatility. The Dennis Chambers Signature Snare delivers a solid, searing, and articulate sound that fits well in any playing field. DC1465S/C119 – Dennis Chambers Signature 14"x6.5" 10-over-8 Snare Drum in Matte Black MSRP: $1,927.00, MAP: $1,156.99 For more information visit **www.pearldrum.com.**

Vic Firth Terra™ Series

Vic Firth's new series of drumsticks celebrates the natural beauty our earth gifts us in each drumstick we make. Using a proprietary staining process, the unique and beautiful grains are exposed so that no two pairs are alike. Crafted from premium USA Hickory, Vic Firth Terra™ series pays homage to the material drummers around the world rely on to make magic behind their kit.

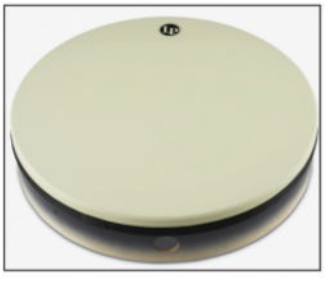
Roland Zenology Pro

For decades, Roland sounds have had a massive influence on music. Our legendary instruments have defined genres like techno, house, rap, trap, and hip hop, and deeply influenced pop, rock, and film music. This long legacy has culminated in the ZEN-Core Synthesis System and ZENOLOGY Pro. ZEN-Core is our most advanced sound engine, powering professional synthesizers like JUPITER-X and FANTOM. With our ZENOLOGY Pro Collection, you get our flagship plug-in, as well as five Model Expansions that recreate iconic Roland instruments—and all for one low price.

Roland is launching the ZENOLOGY Pro Collection, a cost-effective bundle of Roland's flagship plug-in version of the ZEN-Core Synthesis System, as well as five Model Expansions that recreate iconic Roland instruments. Users can gain access to thousands of tones and drum kits, and it is easily expandable to include over 10,000 selections. The ZENOLOGY Pro Collection is available with a special Roland Cloud Lifetime Key purchase for huge savings (as opposed to purchasing each title individually). **Roland.com**

Latin Percussion Launches New Range of Frame Drums

Latin Percussion continues to develop their collection of world percussion instruments with the introduction of a new range of Frame Drums to include the Tar and Bendir. Based on some of the most ancient musical instruments the new Tar and Bendir frame drums have been designed and crafted to honor the traditional instruments of North Africa and the Middle East. They are played in a vertical stance on the lap using mainly one hand for accented beats and the other to hold the position and add finger rolls.



Percussionist Randy Gloss has assisted LP in the design of the new Frame Drums. He and his percussion group can be seen playing them here **https://youtu.be/K-I32xbnRPc.** LP's Tar frame drum is available in two depths, 2-½" and 4", while the Bendir frame drum is available in 4" depth only. The 2-½" Tar is constructed using an 11-ply Poplar shell while the 4" Tar and Bendir are built from a 6-ply Poplar shell with a 12-ply tuning ring. The Bendir version has adjustable strings attached to the frame to act as a snare and create a buzzing sound when the drum is struck.

All the frame drums are tunable, offered in diameters of 14", 16", 18", and 20" and finished in Black Fade. Each features comfy, rounded thumb slots with through-shell tuning systems for easy playing and long-term durability. The synthetic head provides long-lasting pitch and an Easy-Clip enables a tuning key to be safely stored on the drum without interrupting playing. Each drum includes a tuning key and carry bag.

To find out more about all the new LP Frame Drums, plus all the other Latin Percussion products, please go to **lpmusic.com/. #wearerhythm**

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ddrum Dominion Birch 4PC Shell Pack With Paper White Birch Wrap

Quality Drums, Compact Price

By Jason Mehler

In 2005 ddrum raised the bar when it comes to drum quality and price when they released their Dominion series drums. They recently introduced an upgraded version of their Dominion Birch series drums, improving upon both quality and aesthetics. This month we'll take a look at a four piece shell pack wrapped in a paper white birch finish.

Configuration

The four Piece shell pack comes with an 8x12 rack tom, a 14x14 floor tom, a 16x20 kick drum and a 5x14 snare drum. The drums are supplied with Remo UT clear pinstripe drumheads for the toms, reverse dot for the snare drum and clear P3 bass drum batter head. As usual, cymbals, stands, pedals and drum throne are NOT included.

Construction, Finish & Hardware

The six ply shells on the toms and snare are made from 100% birch, with bearing edges cut at 45 degrees. The bass drum uses the configuration, but with an eight ply shell. The drums are wrapped in a stylish paper white birch, which has a soft satin look with a silvery shimmer to highlight the grain patterns. The wrap on these drums is expertly applied. Minus the seam, it could easily pass as a veneer. The lugs are ddrum's Classic Dominion box style lugs. The toms and snare feature 2.3 MM triple flanged rims and the bass drum is affixed with wooden hoops. The 12" rack tom uses ddrum's integrated tom suspension system and the strength of the mounts, legs and hardware on this kit is as rugged and heavy duty as you would see on pricier drum kits.

First Impression

The classy look of the white birch wrap elevates the perceived value of this kit for me. It doesn't look like a wrap, and the hardware is chunky and strong. I checked for some common issues that wrapped drums have such as rubbing or obstruction of the drumhead and rim, bubbling or loose wrapping etc. The PVC-based wrap is tough, yet thin enough to allow clearance between the shell and rim with no problem. The wrap is tight and when tapped with my finger, sounds like a solid drum.

Assembly

The setup was a breeze. Nothing out of the ordinary except for maybe the memory locks on the floor tom legs. Those are frustrating for about 30 seconds until you set 'em and forget 'em. The sturdy double tom holder slides into the bass drum and the rack tom mounts with ease to a ball and socket type tom arm.

Bass Drum

The bass drum came completely assembled and was pretty close to my tuning preference right out of the box. No muffling was necessary; its tone remained crisp and punchy without excessive boominess. With a few tuning tweaks, the bass drum produced a very satisfying sound.

Snare Drum

The Dominion birch snare drum sounds great and tunes up very well. It features a swinging-arm-style throwoff that is very easy to engage and manipulate to get the desired snare response. Buzz rolls on the snare sound wonderful right up to the edge of the drum, even at very low volume. Rimshots and clicks are effortless with this drum, and it offers a high degree of forgiveness and flexibility as it sounds good wherever you strike the drum.

Rack Tom

The 12" rack tom with the pinstripe head was a surprise for me. I wasn't expecting to like it as much as the beech wood 12" on my personal kit, but it is very similar. Its got a great punch and (when tuned properly) produces a tone with medium sustain that doesn't disappear too early or break up into ugly overtones. The pinstripe heads are pretty stable when tuned low, and this drum responds very well in that range.

Floor Tom

The 14" floor tom is… (forgive me) cute? It's like a little R2D2. Small & strong. For a 14" floor tom, the Dominion birch does a great job with the low end. I was aiming for a nice low tone with sustain that was filling, and not thuddy or truncated. The drum responded well and produced a vibration that I could feel in my toes. I'm still partial to a larger floor tom, but this one does the job.

In Conclusion

The Dominion birch four piece shell kit in paper white seems like a great kit for drummers looking for the best bang for the buck. With premium attributes and impressive sound quality, I could see this kit being used for gigging around town, practicing at home, or even recording. This drum kit currently retails at $599 and can be found at **ddrum.com.**

ProMark Retractable Nylon Brushes

By Brian Hill

ProMark has introduced two new versions of retractable nylon brushes in heavy and light weight versions. The Heavy Nylon Brush comes in a 2B size handle with black bristles and offers increased volume and attack. This brush might be more appropriate for rock and singer-songwriter applications. The Light Nylon Brush with yellow bristles comes in a 5B size that is ideal for delicate and gentle traditional brush playing and attack. The soft-touch handle is designed with internal counterweights that make them feel like your favorite drumstick giving you the response of a stick with the tone of a brush. The handles are also larger (fatter) that most tradional brushes which might be appealing to some drummers. These brushes are built to last and are created to ensure optimal playability and durability. The compact retractable feature in convienient and allows you carry the brushes in a case without damaging the brush bristles. Fully extended, the brushes measure in at 13 3/8" long. On-line pricing: $39.99.

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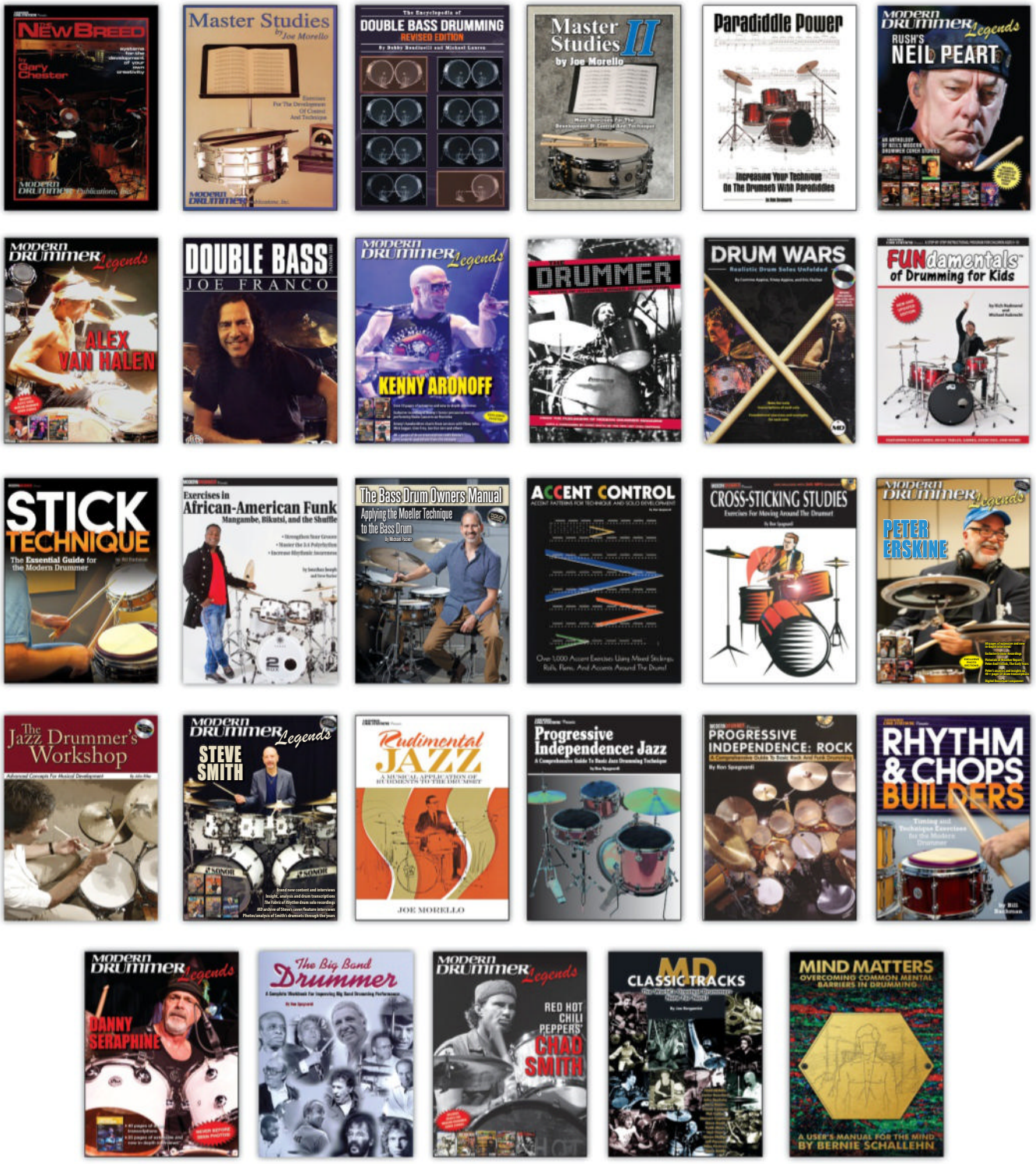

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MODERN DRUMMER 2023 READERS POLL

Another exciting year of drumming has passed, and it's time for the 2023 *Modern Drummer Readers Poll*. Congratulations to all of the winners! Thank you for your drumming and contributions towards the history and evolution of modern drumming. Your recordings, concerts, clinics, shows, books, videos, and articles, are a true inspiration to us all. Congratulations to all of the runners-up (who are listed alphabetically in every category) as well. As many have said, it's truly an honor just to be nominated. Thanks to all of *Modern Drummer*'s readers and fans of talented drummers and notable music who voted in this year's poll.

Hall of Fame
Alex Van Halen

John Douglas

In the early 1970s when Alex Van Halen and Eddie Van Halen formed their early band Mammoth which became Van Halen, many might not have realized the impact that they would have. The impact that Eddie Van Halen had on the guitar and rock and roll is well documented, but Alex's iconic drumming (and behind the scenes business acumen) supported everything. The brothers had a telepathic musical connection. Alex Van Halen absorbed the history of rock drumming and became monumentally important and highly influential to millions of drummers of the 70s, 80s, and 90s generations. Alex's blazing double bass drum work on "I'm the One" and "Hot For Teacher," his ear bending drumming on "Jump," the hard grooving shuffle of "So This Is Love?" the jungle rock of "Everybody Wants Some," and the list goes on and on… ALL of Alex's drum parts became essential and identifiable in rock drumming. His full bodied and piercing snare sound is as signature as anything in modern rock drumming. Alex's right-hand work on many of Van Halen's later tunes like "Drop Dead Legs," "Right Now," and "Feels So Good," are simply stunning, and the funky grooves on "Amsterdam," and "Cabo Wabo" are positively contagious. Simply put, Alex Van Halen created an original drumming voice within legendary songs and brought his unique sense of swing and audacity to rock drumming.

The Modern Drummer Hall Of Fame, 1979-2022

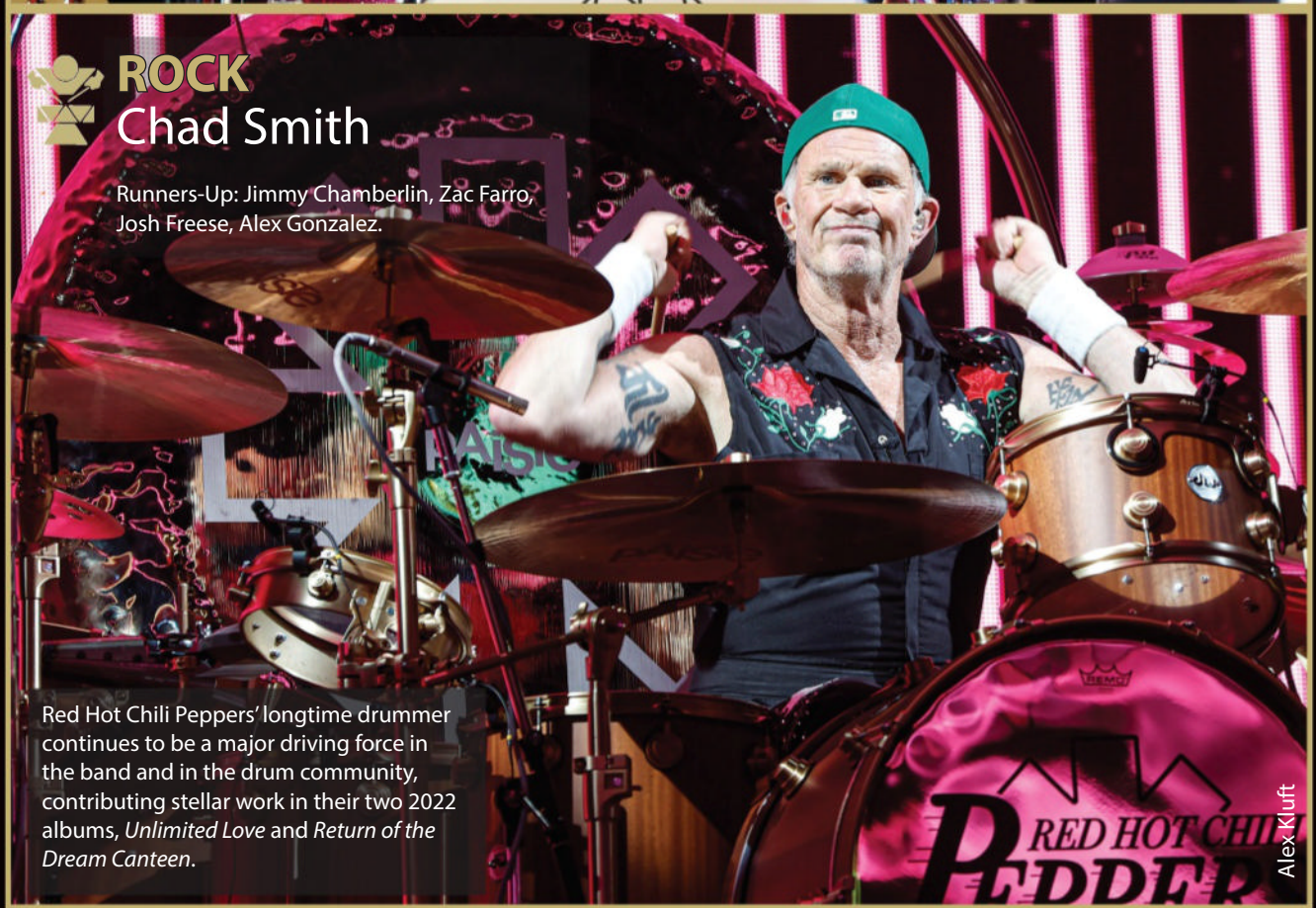
2022 Taylor Hawkins
2021 Sheila E.
2020 Nicko McBrain
2019 Dave Grohl
2018 Clyde Stubblefield
2017 Peter Erskine
2016 Vic Firth
2015 Ian Paice
2014 Carmine Appice
2013 Bernard Purdie
2012 Phil Collins
2011 Jim Chapin
2010 Hal Blaine
2009 Mitch Mitchell
2008 Ginger Baker
2007 Jack DeJohnette
2006 Charlie Watts
2005 Stewart Copeland
2004 Mike Portnoy
2003 Simon Phillips
2002 Steve Smith
2001 Dennis Chambers
2000 Dave Weckl
1999 Roy Haynes
1998 Ringo Starr
1997 Terry Bozzio
1996 Vinnie Colaiuta
1995 Elvin Jones
1994 Larrie Londin
1993 Jeff Porcaro
1992 Max Roach
1991 Art Blakey
1990 Bill Bruford
1989 Carl Palmer
1988 Joe Morello
1987 Billy Cobham
1986 Tony Williams
1985 Louie Bellson
1984 Steve Gadd
1983 Neil Peart
1982 Keith Moon
1981 John Bonham
1980 Buddy Rich
1979 Gene Krupa

ALL AROUND
Gregg Bissonette

Runners-Up: Mark Guiliana, Omar Hakim, Russ Miller, Antonio Sánchez.

As a member of Ringo Starr's All-Starr Band, The Redcoats, and as a solo drummer, Bissonette leaves an impression in every musical scenario. His studied, hybrid approach behind the kit makes him a truly unique drummer, and he's proven once again that any and every genre is in his wheelhouse.

Alex Kluft



ROCK
Chad Smith

Runners-Up: Jimmy Chamberlin, Zac Farro, Josh Freese, Alex Gonzalez.

Red Hot Chili Peppers' longtime drummer continues to be a major driving force in the band and in the drum community, contributing stellar work in their two 2022 albums, *Unlimited Love* and *Return of the Dream Canteen*.

Alex Kluft

Robert Cifarelli

JAZZ
Peter Erskine

Runners-Up: Brian Blade, Terri Lyne Carrington, Joe Farnsworth, Nasheet Waits.

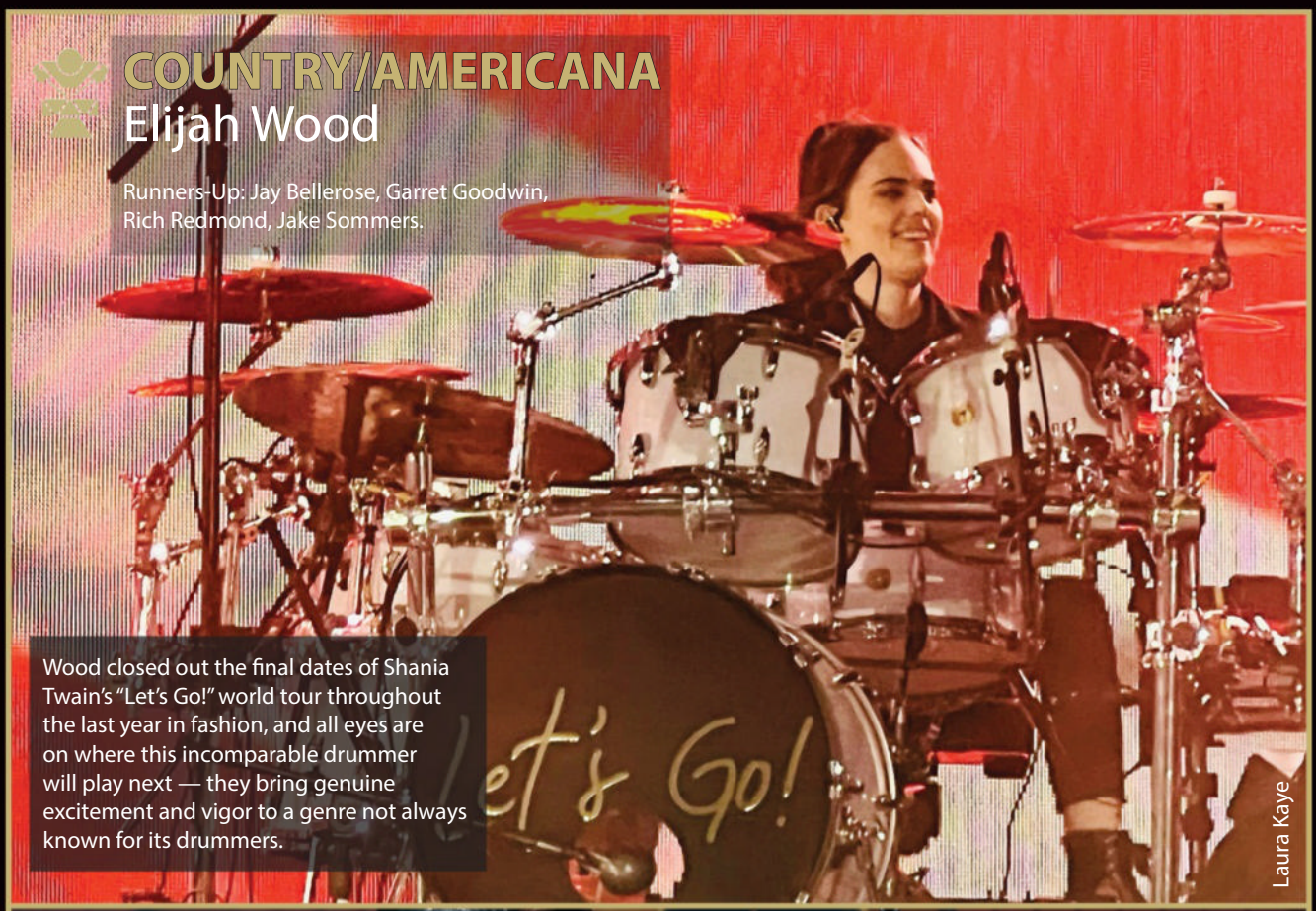
Modern Drummer is keen on featuring Erskine's words of wisdom each month for a reason — the jazz drummer continues to dedicate himself to his craft, fostering new collaborations and focusing on educating the next generation of drummers around the world.

Daniel Dorsa

R&B/FUNK
Questlove

Runners-Up: Justin Brown, Adam Deitch, Zigaboo Modeliste, Stanton Moore.

Questlove's brilliance behind the kit (and behind the beat) is on display nightly with his duties as bandleader for *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* alongside The Roots.

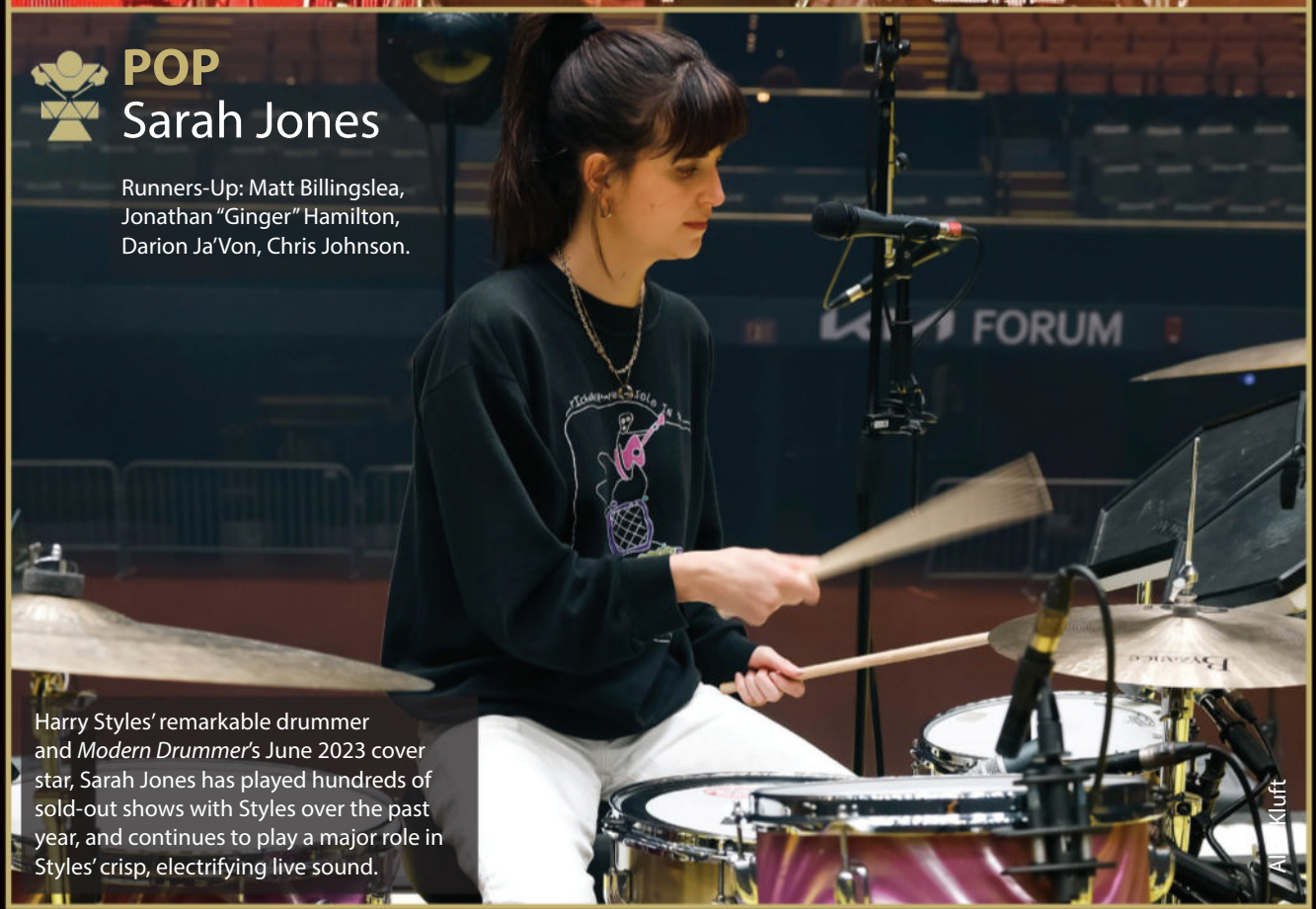


COUNTRY/AMERICANA
Elijah Wood

Runners-Up: Jay Bellerose, Garret Goodwin, Rich Redmond, Jake Sommers.

Wood closed out the final dates of Shania Twain's "Let's Go!" world tour throughout the last year in fashion, and all eyes are on where this incomparable drummer will play next — they bring genuine excitement and vigor to a genre not always known for its drummers.

Laura Kaye



POP
Sarah Jones

Runners-Up: Matt Billingslea, Jonathan "Ginger" Hamilton, Darion Ja'Von, Chris Johnson.

Harry Styles' remarkable drummer and *Modern Drummer*'s June 2023 cover star, Sarah Jones has played hundreds of sold-out shows with Styles over the past year, and continues to play a major role in Styles' crisp, electrifying live sound.

Al Kluft

PROGRESSIVE ROCK
Mike Portnoy

Runners-Up: Danny Carey, Mickey "Cavs" Cavanagh, Gavin Harrison, Baard Kolstad.

Mike Portnoy continued his prolific streak with excellent new records from his rock trio The Winery Dogs, new studio and live albums as a member of Neal Morse's band, and dozens of engaging live shows.

Felipe Laverde

METAL
Jay Weinberg

Runners-Up: Art Cruz, Lars Ulrich, Dirk Verbeuren, Brooks Wackerman.

Not only is Weinberg *Modern Drummer*'s September 2023 cover star, he's a vital and immensely talented member of Slipknot, whose exploratory 2022 album *The End, So Far* led to the band›s most satisfying run of shows yet.

Anthony Saunga

JAZZ FUSION
Dave Weckl

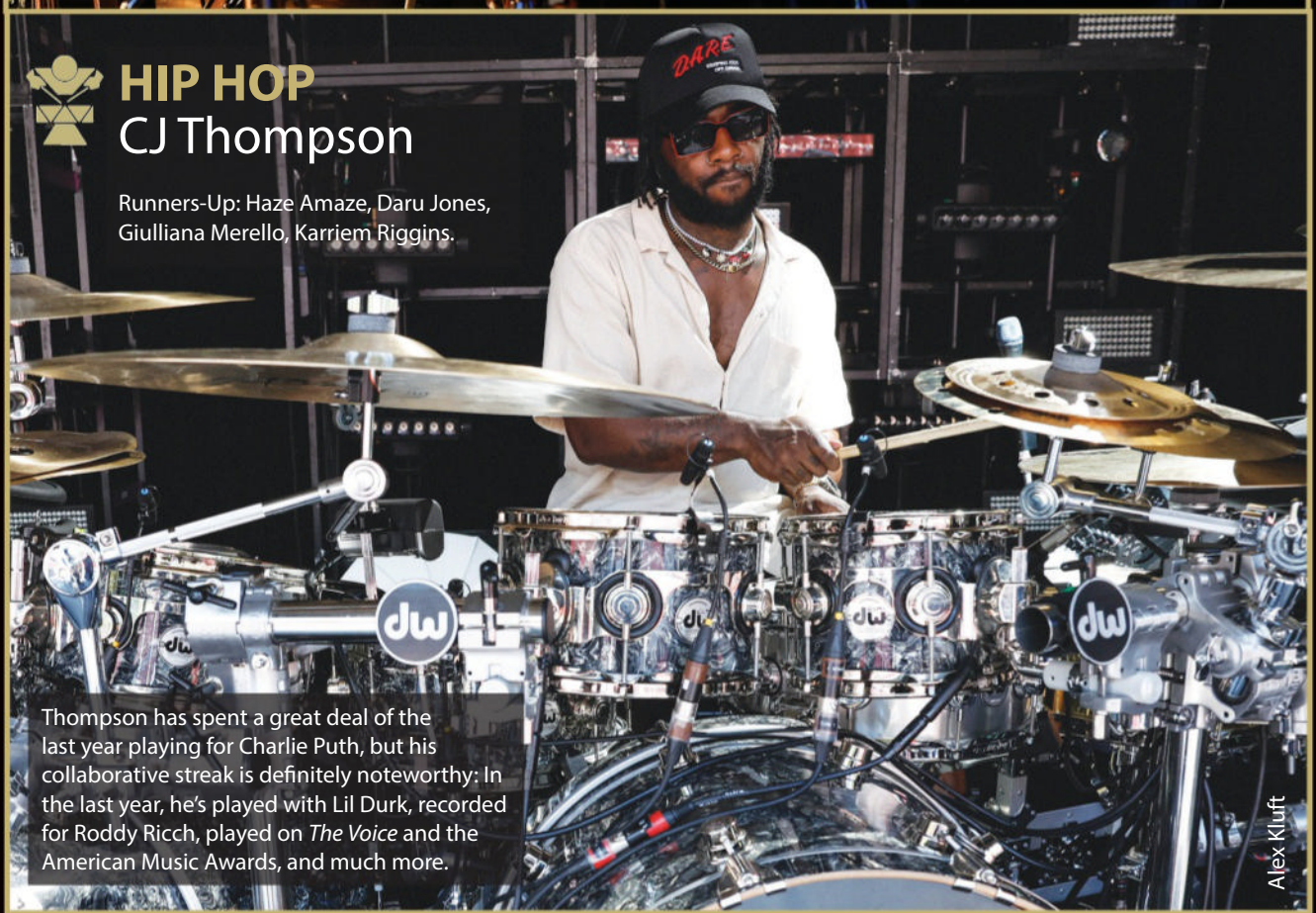
Runners-Up: Billy Cobham, Louis Cole, Gary Novak, Steve Smith.

Dave has stayed very busy throughout the last year, with numerous tours, clinics, and records, all displaying his comprehensive drumming knowledge and his exceptional talent.

Alex Kluft

HIP HOP
CJ Thompson

Runners-Up: Haze Amaze, Daru Jones, Giulliana Merello, Karriem Riggins.



Thompson has spent a great deal of the last year playing for Charlie Puth, but his collaborative streak is definitely noteworthy: In the last year, he's played with Lil Durk, recorded for Roddy Ricch, played on *The Voice* and the American Music Awards, and much more.

Alex Kluft

WORLD PERCUSSION
Giovanni Hidalgo

Runners-Up: Airto, Ray Cooper, Zakir Hussain, V. Selvaganesh

Hidalgo has been one of the reigning kings of Latin jazz percussion for a reason. His skill and personality rings out with each hit, as shown in his noteworthy 2023 tribute to the great Tito Puente.

Jorge Ramirez Porrela

UP & COMING
Paulina "Pau" Villarreal Vélez

Runners-Up: Daniel Fang, Savanah Harris, Garrett P Tyler, Mark Whitfield Jr.

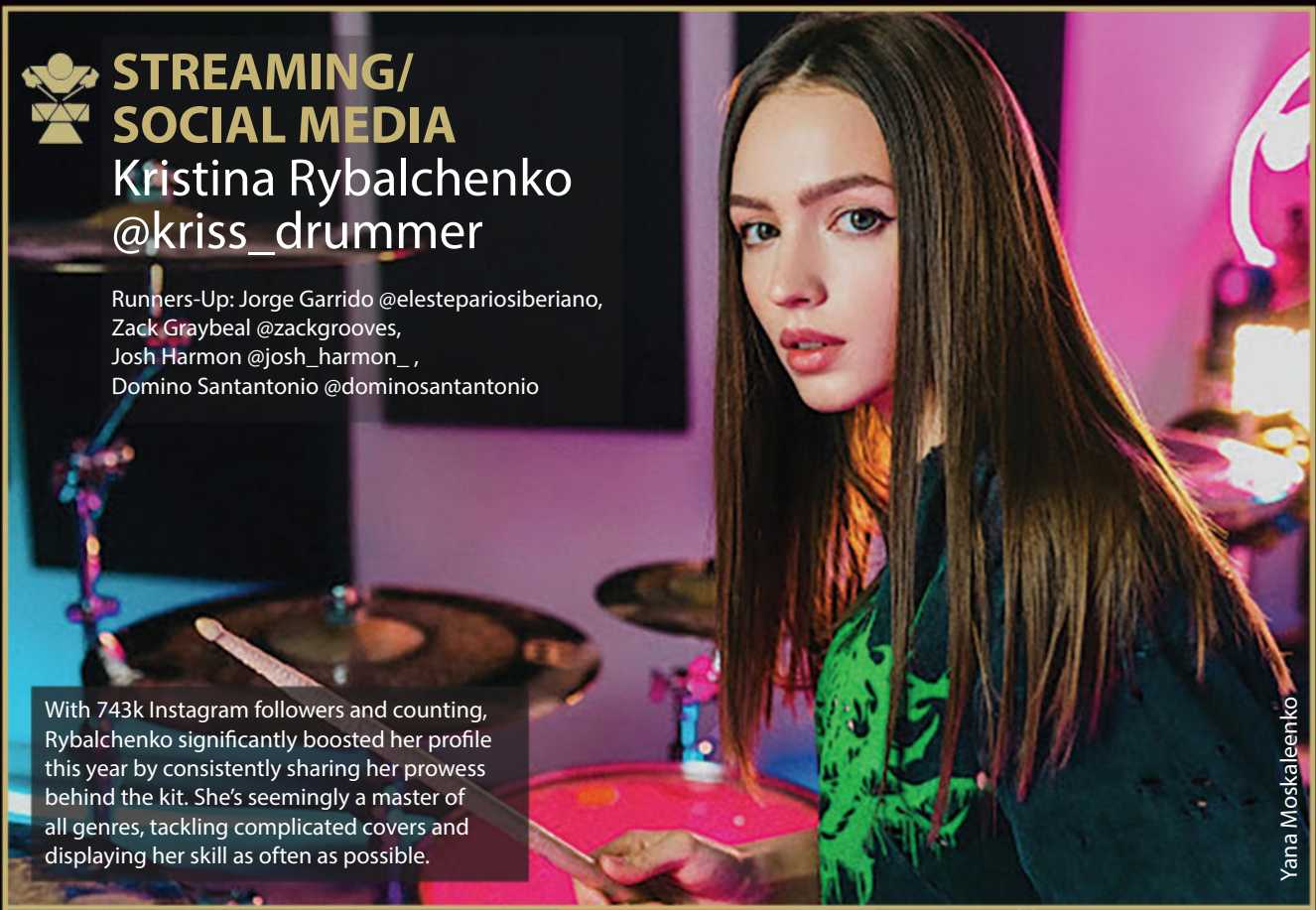
Villareal Vélez and her rock band The Warning made a major impression throughout the last year. With her sisters by her side, Pau contributed memorable drum parts to the band's 2022 album *Error* and treated fans to electrifying shows across the globe.

Dara Christine e Silva

STREAMING/ SOCIAL MEDIA

Kristina Rybalchenko @kriss_drummer

Runners-Up: Jorge Garrido @elestepariosiberiano, Zack Graybeal @zackgrooves, Josh Harmon @josh_harmon_ , Domino Santantonio @dominosantantonio



With 743k Instagram followers and counting, Rybalchenko significantly boosted her profile this year by consistently sharing her prowess behind the kit. She's seemingly a master of all genres, tackling complicated covers and displaying her skill as often as possible.

Yana Moskaleenko

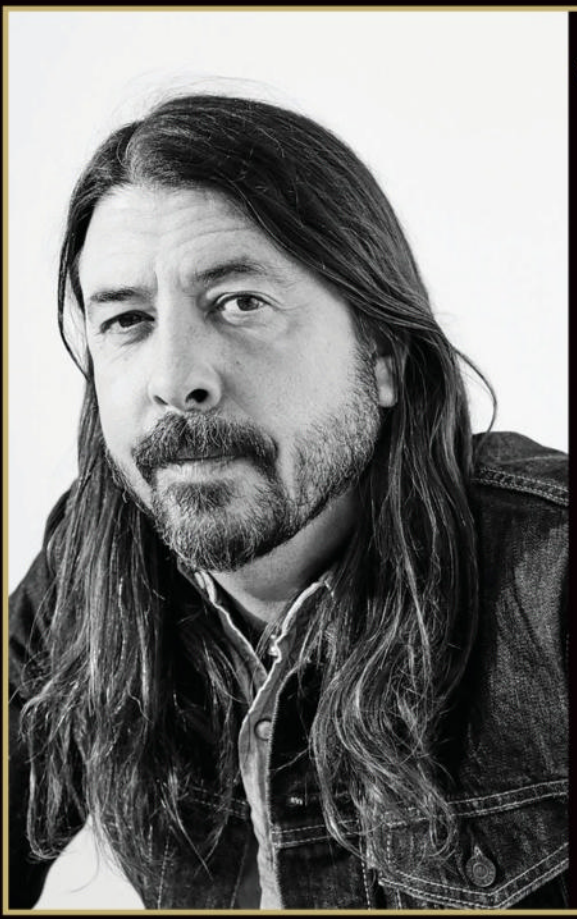
CLINICIAN/ EDUCATOR/ONLINE

Thomas Lang

Runners-Up: Tommy Igoe, Larnell Lewis, Todd Sucherman, Dave Weckl.

Thomas Lang has proven his devotion to the craft of drumming time and time again, and his multi-disciplinary work throughout the last year — especially his frequent and comprehensive drum camps at the Westlake Drum Center — is certainly noteworthy.

Alex Kluft



RECORDED PERFORMANCE
Foo Fighters, *But Here We Are*, drummer Dave Grohl

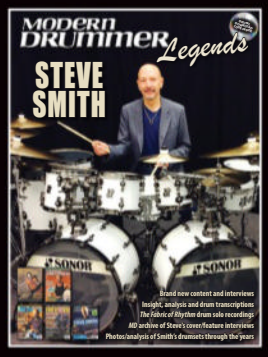
Runners-Up:
Dave Lombardo, *Rites of Percussion*, drummer Dave Lombardo;
Metallica, *72 Seasons*, drummer Lars Ulrich;
Winery Dogs, *III*, drummer Mike Portnoy;
Vital Information, *Time Flies*, drummer Steve Smith.

Magdalena Wosinska

Grohl's work behind the kit on Foo Fighters' eleventh album was deeply inspired, loaded with context, and compositionally fierce. His blistering force on the title track, dreamy beats on "Show Me How," and powerful work on "The Teacher" are examples of Grohl's unmatched rock drumming talent.

EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT
Modern Drummer Legends – Steve Smith

Runners-Up:
Tim Carman, *Haynes-Ism*,
Dave Dicenso, *Fluid Fills and Musical Phrasing*,
Dave Garibaldi, *DG'Z Notebook*,
John Riley, *The Master Drummer*.



Steve Smith's comprehensive, insightful *Legends* book takes a deep look at his career while also focusing on providing a strong educational focus.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION
School of Rock

Runners-Up:
Berklee College of Music,
Manhattan School of Music,
North Texas College of Music,
USC Thornton School of Music.

The music education stalwarts have continued with even more success over the last year. With several industry awards in tow, School of Rock has expanded their approach and offered an unmatched music education experience — one that gives aspiring drummers a major and memorable leg up.

Rob DeMartin

Jay Weinberg and Max Weinberg

Like Son, Like Father

By Mark Griffith

This month, *Modern Drummer* is honored to celebrate an MD cover that appeared 14 years ago. That was when Bruce Springsteen chose (E Street Band's longtime drummer) Max Weinberg's son Jay Weinberg to replace Max for a tour that he couldn't do. Max had recently become the drummer for NBC's new *Conan O' Brien Tonight Show,* and it was impossible for Max to make the yearlong Springsteen touring commitment. Springsteen had known Jay since he was a kid, and had seen Jay play with the band Against Me!, and Bruce thought that Jay would be the perfect replacement for "Mighty Max." Since then, Max has rejoined Springsteen and the E Street Band, and Jay has donned a mask to become the drummer for the musical and artistic force Slipknot. *Modern Drummer* had the pleasure of talking with both Jay and Max separately and together, while each was touring and playing sold out shows with their respective bands.

MD: Jay, what was it like to have your dad at the Slipknot show last night?

JW: It was phenomenal, what a treat. The only other time our separate tours happened to cross paths was 12 years ago, when I was out with Against Me! in Europe. My dad, Bruce, and bunch of E Street Band members had a night off in Gothenburg, and we just happened to be playing a festival in town, so they came out. But last night, dad got a healthy dose of the 'Knot, that's for sure (laughs). It was awesome to have him out at our show. Perfectly enough, we hit the stage at 12:00 midnight on Father's Day. For our respective tours to align in such a way, it felt written in the stars. I'm on tour with Slipknot, he's on tour with Bruce, and by sheer happenstance we're intersecting in Belgium on tour. I don't know of many father-son duos in rock'n'roll that are able to share moments like that. It's very special, and we don't take it for granted.

MW: The best Father's Day present Jay could give me was this performance. My favorite Father's Days are when I'm with my children, so the fact that this lined up in the middle of both of our tours is amazing. Seeing my son play and going through so many of the same things that I went through — and am still going through — in music is exciting. However, this wasn't all that different from going to see him play hockey when he was a kid at the Red Bank Armory. This wasn't my first time seeing Slipknot. But this time I took one of my bandmates, pianist Roy Bittan and his son, Alex and they were amazed — as was I! Jay is a monster. It seems like their particular type of metal is a lot like jazz and bebop. In bebop, it was all about the bass drum, and so is this. This type of metal is a long way from just doing eighth notes on the double bass drums back and forth like in the Ginger Baker days. The combinations and permutations, and the syncopation is just unbelievable, and they're so tight, it's amazing. Last night I must have been 250 feet away from the stage, but you really feel the concussion of the bass drums in your chest. It's not a strictly "between your ears" thing, you're feeling that air pressure against your body.

In the metal world it seems to me that very often the songs are written in cut time where the hands and the top end are played in half time, and the bottom with the bass drums are doing all the syncopation. That "halftime on top" thing is what I am talking about that's so distinctive. On the kicks, I hear the injection of the (sort of) bebop and hard bop bass drum thing. In the 60s they used to call it "dropping bombs" with the bass drum. Drummers like Max Roach, Art Blakey, and Roy Haynes were getting away from feathering and playing quarter notes lightly on the bass drum. They were integrating the bass drum playing against the ride cymbal beat and the snare drum comping along. The kind of metal that Jay is playing, it seems that the bass drums and the bass guitar are carrying the syncopation and the embellishing in support of the riffs of the guitars.

Anthony Scanga

JW: I can appreciate that, and I think there is truth to that. With Slipknot there is so much volume and intensity projected towards the audience that it is a little hard for a first-time listener to focus on the details. My dad has seen us enough to where he's started to see past the layers of volume and intensity and pay attention to the details that we are putting into the music. And that attention to detail is not unique to us. We care about the details a lot, but all the bands that we play with are very detail focused. We pride ourselves on being a tight band and knowing what it takes to be that tight. You need to have an attention to detail to lock into intricate guitar riffs, vocal melodies, and all of the rhythmic patterns that are happening at any given moment. We pay a lot of attention to that. You might not realize it because we're going all crazy on stage, but it is there.

What we do isn't too dissimilar from what dad and Bruce's band does. Though our music is challenging to play, difficulty and complexity aren't the end goals of what Slipknot is striving to achieve. We're not trying to be the fastest band out there, we're not trying to be the most complicated band out there. We want to be the most *impactful* band that we can be. We want to really bludgeon you with our art, our music, and our intensity. That's what we do well.

In contrast to the crazy-technical, polyrhythmic approach that perhaps some of our peers take, I personally get more satisfaction out of what my dad just mentioned — feeling the air hitting you because I'm bashing the hell out of the kick drum. That physical sensation is a real sweet spot with me. We want to push the extremes of our levels of speed, intensity, and ferociousness; but we approach it with more of a classic sensibility. We want to deliver the same musical impact we felt as fans when we listened to Black Sabbath or Led Zeppelin for the first time. People were bowled over by those bands, and we want to deliver that same impact. I see Slipknot as having more ties with traditional rock'n'roll, punk rock, hardcore…even Pink Floyd-y experimentation, than we have with our contemporaries and peers in today's metal. We're a very organic sounding band, and I think that's one of the things that I've always strived for with my drums. I want everything to sound like me. I'm not trying to sound like a typewriter, I'm not trying to sound perfect.

I'm trying to sound good for what we do, which is a very rough-around-the-edges, very in-your-face kind of band.

MW: We drummers always talk about speed, but as you know, Buddy Rich was always famous for saying, "It's not about speed, it's about the musicality." One of the most annoying things you could ever say to Buddy was, "How do you play so fast?" What I'm referring to in Jay's drumming with Slipknot is the dexterity. When I watch Jay play the broken-up patterns on the bass drums the permutations and combinations are incredible, the facility is amazing.

When Jay first started teaching himself to play the drums, a lot of people assumed that I had something to do with it. I had nothing to do with it, other than telling him to keep as relaxed as possible. To play any sort of high energy music, you must be relaxed. Last night I had the opportunity to be crouching right behind him and I could see his extreme relaxation. Those blast beats are one of the hardest things to do, particularly when you're hyped up. There must have been 80 or 90 thousand people there, but to really focus on the music is something that I always stressed. Jay is always focused on the music. That's what allows him to shine through. Being in the audience, so much of the drive and intensity is coming from the drums at his show.

What I try to do on the drums, whether it's with Bruce or with my bebop band, is be a bit of a chameleon. If I'm playing with my little bebop band, it's very different than if I'm playing with Bruce and the E Street Band. And as I've gotten older, I am starting to see how much I can leave out, and it's really working. Like right now on tour in 2023 I'm playing all this classic material that Bruce has written — and I have recorded — much simpler than I used to. It's not for lack of being able to do choppy kind of things. I'm realizing more and more that these songs are lyrical narratives and, as a drummer, you need to support those narratives. The big lesson for me is that you don't have to play a fill at the end of every verse going into every chorus.

MD: Jay, your dad just talked about how his playing has evolved throughout his years of playing with Bruce, how has your playing evolved through your years of playing with Slipknot?

JW: Truthfully, it feels like I'm too in the middle of it to comment on what I'm doing nowadays, or how things are evolving. It's a constant effort of sharpening what I do and trying to push my abilities into new places and new sonic territories. With more experience over the years, through the repetition of playing live all the time, and through the repetitious nature of touring the way we do, I feel it's only natural to improve and sharpen what you're doing. In the context of a band, you start to understand your musical chemistry better and better. I feel like that's the trajectory that I'm taking; finding ways where I can better express myself on the instrument, and in concert with my bandmates. That's really the most important thing to me. Being a supporting structure for guitar riffs, melodies, other percussive elements — that's my role within Slipknot. Whatever I can do to emphasize those things to the highest degree is the most important thing that I do as a drummer. There's a multitude of things that you can do to develop as a drummer and a band member.

MD: Your dad has told me how he really didn't teach you anything on the drums. But you've seen him play a lot, and although he never sat you down and showed you stuff, you've watched him play a lot. So, what have you learned by watching your dad play?

JW: The professionalism, the steadiness, the way he's 100% from the start of the show till the end of the show. There's no release of his intensity from start to finish, that's always majorly impressive. Beyond being a very capable — to say the least — drummer who is amazing at his craft, it's more about the intangibles. The sustainability to have a career this long and still be playing at his best, that's astounding in and of itself. To still be developing into your 70s, that is hugely inspirational. I've been absorbing and watching him play in the E Street Band since I was a kid. All of that has completely informed how I approach music. Their dedication to what they do, and the way that they have their own sound that nobody can replicate is important to me. Having that firsthand education and having a front row seat to that was huge for my own development and how I approach music.

MD: Through watching the E Street Band, and through being a part of it for a year or so, how has Bruce and the band influenced who you are as a musician today?

JW: From my experience of playing with The E Street Band for about a year, I learned about the "balance" of how things are orchestrated — it's very much a Flying-V formation on stage. Meaning that everybody is there in support of Bruce. Everyone is paying attention to Bruce's mannerisms and what he's doing at all times. That makes it a unique musical context. That type of balance doesn't really apply to Slipknot. The E Street Band is orchestrated differently, how everything falls into place musically is very different from Slipknot. We're not the Flying-V formation; it's nine guys all equally charging forward to assault the audience.

The E Street Band is the high watermark for any band to be tight with each other. However, it's organic tightness as opposed to how some bands today are tight. So many bands today are tight because everyone is listening to a metronome and everyone's in their own little land, not paying attention to each other. Organic tightness is because everyone is paying attention and listening to each other. I find that yields more interesting, more human results than the alternative.

MD: I'm going to turn this around. Since we're all eternal students of music and the drums, Max what do you learn from

Max and Jay in 2002

Rob DeMartin

and in 2023

watching Jay and watching Slipknot play?

MW: I can tell you, through watching Jay both as a drummer but more importantly as a father, to see how unbelievably hard he's worked to attain his level of drumming is most impressive. His dedication, discipline, the application of all his abilities to be excellent in whatever he did, those are personality traits that he has always had. Whether it was playing hockey, or his artwork, or the other things that he was interested in. Dedication and discipline are how he approaches *everything*. When he decided to teach himself to play the drums, he took all those attributes and applied them to the drums. I never pushed either of my children to be musicians. When they were growing up, they saw me mostly as a television personality on the late-night shows who played the drums. And, when they were old enough, they saw some of the outrageous comedy we all did, and that side of my entertainer abilities. However, neither of them has really seen a time when I didn't play professionally.

I think the idea of professionalism is something that I got from my parents, and it was something that my wife and I tried to pass along to our kids. My mother always used to say, "Show up on time, shave, and dress in your finest." That takes its hold on you. Jay tried every instrument, he got pretty good on guitar and bass, then he switched to drums. He spent thousands of hours practicing and playing. Having a career as a musician (or building a career in any field) is not easy. It is not easy to have any kind of longevity, you gotta keep all your senses attuned all the time, and I'm impressed with how seriously Jay takes his career. He showed me his warmup room at the festival the other night, and he does a whole show backstage before he even gets on stage. He doesn't take anything for granted.

I've had the both the ups and downs in my career in music. If you don't learn from that, and if you don't do everything you can to avoid the pitfalls, then it's a hobby. If you really want to be serious about music, you treat it like any other profession, because it is a profession. I see that in Jay and it's a delight. I certainly appreciate his drumming skills, which are far beyond my capabilities; the thing that that I do is very old school compared to Slipknot, for example. Music is always evolving, but I think it all still comes from the same emotional place.

There is something in us drummers, there's something rhythmic that needs to come out. You can distill it philosophically to the way that we relate to the world. Whether you're playing a wedding, bar mitzvah, theater, arena, stadium, or to a field of 100,000 people… The Weinberg method is that you don't play any of those gigs differently, you give 1,000% to each and every performance. You can have your musical preferences, that's fine. I have played all sorts of music and I can find the beauty in all kinds of music. I love Broadway music, I love pop music, I love country music, Led Zeppelin and The Beatles are two of my favorite bands, but they're all quite different. It's about having big ears. Jay was constantly listening to music before he became a musician. He related to it as a fan first.

I say the credit goes to his mother who played both of our kids classical music all the time, especially when they were young children. She wove in classical, Beatles, Zeppelin, and the music we grew up with, with the hope that such exposure would lead them to discover their own music. I think the way Jay plays embodies a direct correlation to the classical music he listened to as a little kid. He knows a lot of symphonic music — Beethoven, Mozart, Brahms, Bach, all the greats.

One event that's really memorable is when Becky took our daughter to a concert at Carnegie Hall to hear the very famous pianist named Maurizio Pollini with The New York Philharmonic. Jay was three or four years old, so I took him to a museum instead. When we met up to go home, the concert was still going on and Jay and I were in the lobby. When we were waiting in the lobby, Jay recognized the piece of music that Pollini was playing. It was a watershed moment for me. He grew from that constant exposure to music, the arts, and museums.

There are books on parenting but there's no real manual. We all make mistakes, and hopefully the mistakes happen less than the successes. I'm very proud of the fact that Jay never ever got distracted by the frivolous and, frankly, dangerous elements of being in the music business. I have seen a lot of people get sidelined by bad habits, bad attitudes, and a false sense of entitlement. But I can tell you this as an observer, I've never seen anybody work harder than Jay at their craft, with the possible exception of me before he was born.

MD: Jay, what is this pre-show warm-up your dad is referring to?

JW: When I'm on the road, I pretty much try to live the same day every day (laughs). I try to keep the consistency of having the same thing for breakfast, having the same warmup routine, drinking the same amount of water every day. I have a sort of mental checklist of everything I need to do before I hit stage. It could be equated to an athlete's game-day mentality, having a routine and a process of the things that I need to do throughout my day that leads me to having my best possible performance. The pre-show warmup is typically an hour or two before we're on stage. Besides the actual performance, that is my most intense period of my day. I'm busy making sure everything's in check, making sure my blood is hot by the time I sit down at my kit. That usually involves playing a bunch of songs with our guitarists in our Jam Room, where we have guitar amps and electronic drums set up and we're able to just dial through stuff. We determine how we're feeling about certain songs, maybe how we want to tighten things up. We address all of that while getting our blood going and our muscles moving so we're

not hitting the stage absolutely cold. That's important for me. I hate going on stage without having some sort of a warmup to get a sweat going. That kind of consistency can be difficult when you're chasing sleep, dealing with adverse travel conditions, and unpredictable festival schedules. You just have to kind of fight through it; it's all part of the experience.

MD: Are you guys playing your own music to get warm or something else?

JW: Usually we are playing songs that are new to us. For instance, we have a brand-new set list that we've only played a handful of times, so we're still getting our sea legs with it. We're playing songs that we haven't played in a decade, that's really fun and exciting, but it takes some work to get the muscle memory back. It's a challenge, but that's why we have our Jam Room. We try to make all the mistakes in there, so that we don't make them on stage (laughs).

MW: The flip side of that is that occasionally you don't get to do *any* of that, and you still have to play. The bus may be late, you may get stuck in traffic, you may not show up until right before showtime and have to change your clothes and immediately run on stage. That has happened countless times. It's good to have a routine; there's a talismanic element to it, and I do a similar thing. I warm up on a practice pad for 20 minutes, I stretch during the day. But there have been times that I haven't been able to do any of that, and you still must go out and play. The most important thing is to, at all times, within the context of what you're doing, is to be physically relaxed. Life is a balance between tension and relaxation, it's taken me a lifetime to learn how to do it. The road is so unpredictable, and you may not get to do all those things, so you really gotta be flexible. You want to eliminate every potential problem you can control, because there's always stuff that you can't control. As all three of us know, you're just as likely to have everything go wrong on the road, but you can't bring it to the stage.

To be in a touring band, at whatever level, you gotta be flexible and humble. When you walk on stage you must think you're the greatest in the world that's ever done this. But you leave that attitude on the stage. It doesn't mean you're a showoff, or you're stealing the limelight. You're doing the job to the best you can do on any given night, and you believe in yourself.

MD: Jay, it sounds like you (like many) have had many "obsessions" in your life. Can you tell me how being obsessed with something like hockey has helped you learn how to become a better drummer?

JW: When you're in those environments, the common thread for finding success is work ethic. How much can you discipline yourself to pursue anything, whether it's a sport or an instrument. It's all about application. When I found myself at crossroads of focusing on either hockey or drums, I didn't want to half-ass being a hockey player or a musician. So, when drums started becoming a much more serious passion for me, I had to let hockey go. I couldn't do both equally and with the intensity that both require. I knew that one was going to have to fall to the wayside.

Those environments necessitate a lot of dedication. It's a lot of travel, no sleep, and always fighting against adversity. The challenge of learning is going to make for some very special moments, and some really special things that you can be proud of in life. I'm very fortunate and very thankful to have been able to do what I've done so far, but it really feels like I'm just starting. I think every everybody should be so lucky to find a practice where they always feel like they're still at the starting line.

MW: The bottom line is Jay is my son and I love him and his sister to the depths of my soul. Going to see him play with Slipknot was not dissimilar from going to the Red Bank Armory to see him play hockey when he was a kid. That was something that he loved to do, and he took it seriously. It was a trip for me to bring Roy and Alex Bittan to see Slipknot and seeing them blown away by the show because Jay and Alex were on tour with us when they were little kids. All of us in the E Street Band who have children have so enjoyed having them with us, watching them all grow up into fine, accomplished individuals. Jay and I talk several times a week, sometimes every day, there's nobody I'd rather hang out with than Jay and his wife Chloe. We have a small family but we're tight.

People still ask about Jay taking my place in the E Street Band when he was 18. Everybody thinks they can't be replaced, and that's not true. No one in The E Street Band had ever had a sub before, and I had some complex and mixed feelings. But having Jay sub for me on tour when he was 18 and the pride and joy I felt for him making that job his own far outweighed the idea of being replaced. To see him do that so well with our band — I don't know how many fathers have ever had that experience. Then, to be on the cover of *Modern Drummer* together 14 years ago, *and* to be recreating that today — now how cool is that? There are other very well-known drummers who have children who are drummers. But to have Jay actually become part of the E Street Band when it was fully operational and kicking ass— that was VERY special and unique.

What can I say — I'm Jay's biggest fan.

JW: He's my biggest hero, and I'm his biggest fan.

MD: And *Modern Drummer* is a big fan of both of you!

Read on! We keep the learning going with separate and in-depth interviews with both Max and Jay Weinberg. Both are fantastic and celebrated drummers and both of them have a great deal to share about drumming, music, the music business, and life. We're just getting started…

Anthony Scanga

Max Weinberg

Back on E Street

By Mark Griffith

To some, he's "Mighty" Max, the longtime drummer of Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band. To other, perhaps younger fans, he's familiar as the bandleader and comic foil to Conan O' Brien, when the latter hosted NBC-TV's *Late Night with Conan O' Brien* and the short-lived *Tonight Show with Conan O' Brien*. And, to many even younger people, he's the father of veteran Slipknot drummer Jay Weinberg. To even fewer, he's the author of one of the greatest drumming books ever written called *The Big Beat*. Truthfully, Max wears all of these hats very well, and while Max has appeared in *Modern Drummer* several times, there is a lot that he hasn't talked about. He has led a fascinating life both in and out of drumming, and at the age of 72, there are very few drummers who are more qualified to talk about longevity in the drumming and entertainment business than Max Weinberg.

MW: Once I left my teenage years behind and got into the real world of a music career, I never considered myself to be a "rock star." I thought I was a pretty talented drummer who had a lot of potential. And I'm the luckiest guy in the world to have been able to explore that potential with Bruce and the E Street Band for nearly fifty years. But, even before Bruce Springsteen became a star, I considered myself a craftsman in a rock star's band. Tell you what — from that first moment I played with Bruce, I could tell that he was the real deal. Not just because he was standing five feet in front of me at my audition in 1974 delivering like he was in a stadium, but also from the way the guys in the band paid attention to his every move. That night it was just Clarence Clemons, Garry Tallent, Dan Federici, and Bruce in the room. The focus they had was simply incredible. I sensed immediately that this was a band where everybody's pushing in the same direction, and at the age of 23, THAT was a feeling I'd never had with any of my previous bands. The cohesion of everyone working together towards a goal — non-democratically — as I'd describe it. Through the years, Bruce has referred to the structure of the thing we do as a benevolent dictatorship — and it is! And — it works, I savor every moment that I'm on stage with the E Street Band. For those three hours you are truly in concert with the crowd and, hopefully, giving them an experience that will be transformative. It's a responsibility that I never take lightly.

MD: Although you had already been playing with Bruce Springsteen for 10 years when you released *The Big Beat,* reading that book was my introduction to you and rock drumming history. And interviewing you today represents a kind of full circle moment for me.

MW: Excellent! I'm glad for that. Looking back, I was a decent student in school, particularly the subjects I liked but really, all I wanted to do was play the drums and entertain people. Writing a book never occurred to me — too much like school! I'm very proud of *The Big Beat* and the team that worked on it, particularly my co-writer Bob Santelli.

I was always very interested in the historical elements of drums and drumming. As I made my way through the 70s with the E Street Band, I had the good fortune to meet some of my drumming heroes. In fact, the impetus for the book was when Harvey Kubernik, a friend of mine who is very involved in the Los Angeles music scene, asked me if I'd like to meet Hal Blaine. Meet Hal Blaine? Are you kidding? It was 1978 and Bruce and the band were in LA playing a couple of shows at the Forum and The Roxy on Sunset Boulevard.

In 1969, the pictorial magazine *Look* did a cover story on Hal Blaine. He was leaning against his incredible Rolls Royce. Reading a story from a non-music publication, on a drummer, was no less a big deal for me. Later, reading LP liner notes, I found out that — and it's been said by others before me — *fifty of my favorite drummers were Hal Blaine!*

An assistant brought us in to Hal's study, and I was floored when I first saw the décor. Instead of wallpaper, the walls were covered with gold records. Everywhere you looked there were gold records — mostly singles, which were a lot harder to get than gold albums when I was a kid. They probably still are.

I thought I was a pretty talented drummer who had a lot of potential. And I'm the luckiest guy in the world to have been able to explore that potential with Bruce and the E Street Band for nearly fifty years. But, even before Bruce Springsteen became a star, I considered myself a craftsman in a rock star's band.

We hung out and chatted there for a couple of hours — I asked him every question I ever wanted to ask of the drummer that played with The Byrds, The Beach Boys, The Mamas and Papas, Frank Sinatra, the list goes on and on and on. Hal took out and showed me his session book of every session he ever played, and there was something like 35,000 sessions. We lost Hal in 2019 but he's still one of my all-time drumming heroes.

The next day our band was flying to Phoenix to play, and I was sitting next to Dave Marsh, the famed rock writer and journalist. I told him about meeting Hal Blaine and all the stories he told me about working on nearly every record that came out of LA in those years. As we landed Dave said, "You have the makings of a great book." As I said, I'd never thought about writing a book. Too much like work! I'm a drummer, all I thought about was trying to get better at the drums. Dave's idea stuck in my mind, and through the constant touring back then, I began meeting drummers like Johnny Bee from Mitch Ryder's band, London session star Bobby Graham, The Hollies's Bobby Elliot, England's top session man Clem Cattini, and another big hero of mine, Dave Clark. Dave was a hell of a drummer, a very savvy businessman, and he had his name on the bass drum! I saw the Dave Clark Five twice in New Jersey, the first time in May of 1964; the second the next year in Paterson, New Jersey — Dave played the hell out of the drums.

But, after Dave Marsh's suggestion, hooking up with Bob Santelli and his book agent, Sandy Choron the idea of the book began to take shape. We got going and gained some serious momentum. The fourteen drummers who ended up in the book were fantastic— they all became good friends of mine. The last interview we did was with Ringo Starr at his house near Windsor, England. The whole project took about 18 months.

It's a book on *why* you play the drums, not *how* you play the drums. Interestingly everyone I interviewed had a Ringo story because Ringo really did change the drumming world by virtue of his talent and that he was in The Beatles — which was really the first *band*.

Ringo talked about DJ Fontana, and DJ talked about his heroes liked Irv Kotler and Don Lamond. So it was really a history book and was very well received by the critical press at the time. I'm glad you like it — and remember it.

MD: There are a lot of fantastic drummers from New Jersey. How did growing up in New Jersey right outside of New York City help define your drumming career?

MW: Two of the greatest drummers ever are from New Jersey, Cozy Cole was from Atlantic Highlands and had the first rock instrumental hit on top 40 radio ("Topsy, Pt. 1.") Sonny Greer, a mainstay of the

Duke Ellington Orchestra, was from Long Branch, NJ. I was born in Newark, NJ and grew up in a small town next to Newark. But even living in Maplewood, Newark was where we went to the movies, did all of our shopping and went to hear music, particularly the Mosque Theater downtown which is now called Symphony Hall. I loved rhythm as a kid — whether in nature, architecture, or music. Everything has a rhythm to it, so I kind of naturally gravitated to the drums as a young boy and got my first drum when I was four years old in 1955. It was a mini-conga drum that my father bought me, and I still have it. I played that conga drum relentlessly while I was watching the Xavier Cugat Show. I could hold a pretty steady beat, so that was the beginning. A couple of years later my cousin gave me a pretty beat up old snare drum and a pair of sticks. That was my second drum.

I think I probably would have been diagnosed with what they now call ADHD as a kid. My mother — who was a teacher — recognized my intense and un-focused energy. For example, if my son Jay wanted to find out how an alarm clock worked, he would take a screwdriver and unscrew it and carefully disassemble it. His mom's father was a physics professor and Jay always took after him. But me — when I wanted to find out how an alarm clock looked inside, I'd throw it against a wall and *voila*!

I've worn glasses since I was three years old. As a kid, I hated them. I'm still not very fond of wearing glasses. But my reward for going to the optician in downtown Newark was that I would get a handful of cut-out 45 records from the record distributor on the first floor. They were free and the cut-out meant they couldn't be sold. That was the start of my record collection. Weird, eclectic stuff — not all pop music. One of them was "When the Saints Come Marching In." I figured out how to play that in my own little kid way on the snare and it was very Cozy Cole and Gene Krupa-ish. Turns out — music was the one thing that calmed me down and focused that nervous energy. I could listen to records on my little record player for hours. I loved country music, Gene Autry, Johnny Horton, Elvis, Patti Page — all the popular singers of the day. Also, and fortunately for me, my mother was a Broadway musical fanatic so when I was three or four, she'd take me and my two older sisters on Saturday afternoons to sit in the balcony and watch Broadway musicals. I vividly remember the 60-piece orchestra playing in the pit, and that was my first experience with seeing live performance. What a sound! The theater was the greatest thing in the world, I saw the original *My Fair Lady* with Julie Andrews and Rex Harrison and lots of great shows like *South Pacific, Annie Get Your Gun, The King and I, and Fiddler on the Roof, Bye Bye Birdie*. I saw stars like Dick Van Dyke, Chita Rivera, Andy Griffith in *Destry Rides Again*, Mary Martin in *Peter Pan*. The spectacle, the sound, and the reaction of the audience were the most impressive aspects. I can still visualize it and hear it. That was my first experience with show business, and that experience was one of the first sparks that lit the charge to get into show business.

Anthony Scanga

Sometime around 1957 my family was at a wedding or bar mitzvah at the local catering hall. My mom, who had a bit of stage mother in her, went up to the bandleader- a guy named Herbie Zane and asked if her son could play with the band? He looked at this little nervous kid and asked me what I could play. I told him that I could play "When the Saints Come Marching In." My mother always said he looked pretty skeptical but when I got on his drummer's set I went at it. I did my best little kid imitation of whoever was on that record. I was probably pretty terrible, but very enthusiastic. Herbie got a kick out of my "performance" and began to hire me to do the same thing at his club dates. He'd pay me fifty cents, then a dollar, and I worked my way up. I worked with him on and off until I was a young teenager.

When I got to 4th grade in 1960, my elementary school let you pick an instrument to play in the band and naturally I wanted to play the drums, but so did several other kids, I was relegated to the bass drum. The kid who was playing the snare drum lost interest after a few weeks and dropped out. So they put me on both snare and bass. I played the bass drum with my right hand, and I played the snare drum with my left. I could keep really good time doing that and I played with the school band through 6th grade. My best friend Douglas Katz played trumpet and we decided we were going to put together our own orchestra. We invited everybody we knew to his house one day and we had a jam session, out of that came my first organized band which was composed of drums, acoustic bass, piano, and trumpet. We were called Douglas Katz and his Kittens, it was strictly instrumental — no singing. What we were doing was incredibly fun, and people seemed to really enjoy it. That connected me with going to see the Broadway shows and the immediacy of applause. I was a shy and introverted kid, *except when I played the drums*.

There was a gentleman named Gene Thayer who was the local drum teacher. He played on a minor hit record by the Kirby Stone Trio called "If I Knew You Were Coming, I'd Have Baked a Cake." He was a swing big band drummer, and well known in our area as a lovely guy. He was a real hipster, "cool baby" kind of guy. He was

very patient with all his students but quite insistent about teaching "legitimate drumming." "Legitimate" meant you could play a little bit of everything to try to become a *working* drummer. That was my first great lesson about being in the music business.

As I got older, I kept taking lessons and I was using what I was learning. It was very classical and started with the rudiments. It wasn't about beats. It was about learning the rudiments and being able to play what you heard, and you had to *swing*. Eventually I was playing cha-cha's, rumbas, merengues, waltzes, foxtrots, and the surf beat although Mr. Thaler called it the Twist beat. "The Twist" was a huge smash hit dance record by Chubby Checker from 1960. I could also play a pretty good shuffle from hearing "The Wanderer" (with drummer Panama Francis) from an early 60s movie. By the time I was 15 or so you'd could say I'd become a bit of a "legitimate drummer."

On February 9, 1964, for me and millions of other kids, the world changed. That was the night (as we all know) that the Beatles debuted on *The Ed Sullivan Show.* Almost the next day I went looking for some electric guitar players who could sing. Living through Beatlemania and the fantastical onslaught of all the British groups was just incredible in 1964 and '65. The so-called English invasion obviously was the catalyst, but around mid 1966, when that music started to get away from what was basically Chuck Berry and blues influenced rock and roll, my tastes began to move away from the English thing.

Around that time, I started focusing pretty exclusively on soul music like Motown and Stax. The first time I heard the Doors, that was jazz to me— I didn't get it. I do now, but back then I was a rock purist. I didn't have "big ears" at the time. The Beatles' *Rubber Soul* was too "folky" for my taste. On one hand, I was an arrogant headstrong teenager, and I was good at playing the music that I liked. On the other hand, I was playing the club date-legitimate drumming gigs, and I was going to play whatever the bandleader (who was paying me) told me to play, period. I was becoming a "professional drummer." The training of both those approaches served me well. One of the reasons I got the job with the E Street Band was because I was the drummer who didn't want to be Ginger Baker and could play a lot of styles but with a muscular rock approach.

MD: Didn't Bruce's ad say, "Drummer Wanted: No Ginger Baker's?"

MW: Right, and that spoke to me. At the time I was doing a Broadway show. I never really had interest in becoming a studio drummer, and I don't really think I had the ability. I was a performer. I played the hell out of those Cha-Cha's. When we first played "Rosalita" I changed the chorus beat to Ray Charles' "What I'd Say." At that time, that cymbal bell thing was hard to play for young drummers. I remember Bruce remarking once when we were jamming that I was the only drummer he ever played with that actually knew how to play "Wipeout" correctly. I was a jobbing drummer whose first love was rock'n'roll. I had a very strong work ethic instilled in me from a very young age. After Herbie Zane gave me 50 cents for playing at that wedding, my father considered me "a professional" because I got paid for playing drums, although I was only seven years old! But because of that, I took playing the drums very seriously. And I got a huge amount of support from my parents which was very unusual for the mid-60s.

> Before the TV gig I was a drummer, but the TV gig made me a musician.

I did my first recording with a band called Blackstone in 1967 for a local New Jersey label based in Union, New Jersey called Talmu records. This guy had an actual recording studio in his basement. Two years later Blackstone did an entire album for Epic Records, which was the (sort of) rock label for Columbia Records at that time. That experience was a real eye-opener for me. The producers took the advance, the contract we signed was totally one-sided, we got no promotion, and of course the record went nowhere. Epic had given us a two-record deal, so at least maybe we'd have another shot. In our five-piece band, three of the guys felt we needed a hot guitarist and they elected me to tell our guitar player he was out. The problem, as I explained to the guys, was that Dave, the guitarist, wrote all the songs. If we fired him, the label would surely drop us. The vote stood, Dave left, and naturally, we lost the record contract. That's when I learned the hard way that democracy in bands doesn't usually work out very well.

I was twenty years old and actually had an epiphany that the only way I was going to have any longevity as a drummer was to go back to my roots. In other words, play every kind of job and music that was out there. Give up the rock and roll dream and become a serious, legitimate drummer again. Never again would I pin all my hopes on being in band that was a democracy. Little did I know, a couple years earlier, and further down the Parkway a young singer/songwriter had made the same decision. Bruce Springsteen didn't want to be *in* a band-- he wanted to *have* a band.

I was fortunate that in the early 70s there was a great music scene in New York State in Rockland County, about an hour north of where I was living in Jersey. That scene was based around what the band Traffic and other more progressive groups were coming up with at the time. Most of the drummers in that scene emulated Tony Williams, Jack DeJohnette, or Billy Cobham. Miles Davis was determining the new direction for musicians who had chops but wanted to get away from *just* playing straight rock'n'roll, which was always the thing I did best. My friend Joe Delia says that even back then, although I could jam and I was a good improviser, the best thing I did was *chop wood*. Keep the beat and the groove. It always stuck with me that Joe's advice was sound.

During this period, I was also taking lessons in New York from Jim Chapin, I didn't get very far because his stuff was so hard, but those lessons put me in New York City and Jim and I became great friends. I used to hang out at Frank Ippolito's Professional Percussion Center as a kid and see Buddy Saltzman, Panama Francis, Sticks Evans, Jo Jones, Sonny Greer, Grady Tate — so many of the greats just hangin' and playing on the counter of practice pads Frank kept available. Just being around those guys was an education.

I've always tried to do my craft as artfully as possible. It's funny at the age of 72, I think back to when the guys in the E Street Band used to call me Mr. Self-Improvement. I guess I always had something to prove and the way to be successful at that was to try to get better at being a musician and being a drummer. For some reason that seems to be a common trait amongst drummers. The best education I ever had in terms of becoming a better drummer was leading my band on *Conan O' Brien's Tonight Show.* As a bandleader on TV, I was faced with different stuff every day, and I was playing with six phenomenal musicians. I never called myself a jazz drummer, but that was my TV persona. And I based my entire TV persona off seeing Buddy Rich on Johnny Carson's show when I was

growing up.

I had some serious jazz players in that band. The incredible pianist was Scott Healy, but all the guys had chops in all areas of music. They are professional musicians to this day. Since then, I've played with some serious jazz musicians like pianist David Kikoski who is one of the greatest piano players I have ever known. We have a little bebop group together and I've been able to acquit myself playing (sort of) mid 60s bop. But if it wasn't for learning from the guys in The Max Weinberg 7, I would have never become the drummer that I am today. Sure, I put my own kind of East Coast muscle spin on it. Before the TV gig I was a *drummer*, but the TV gig made me a *musician*.

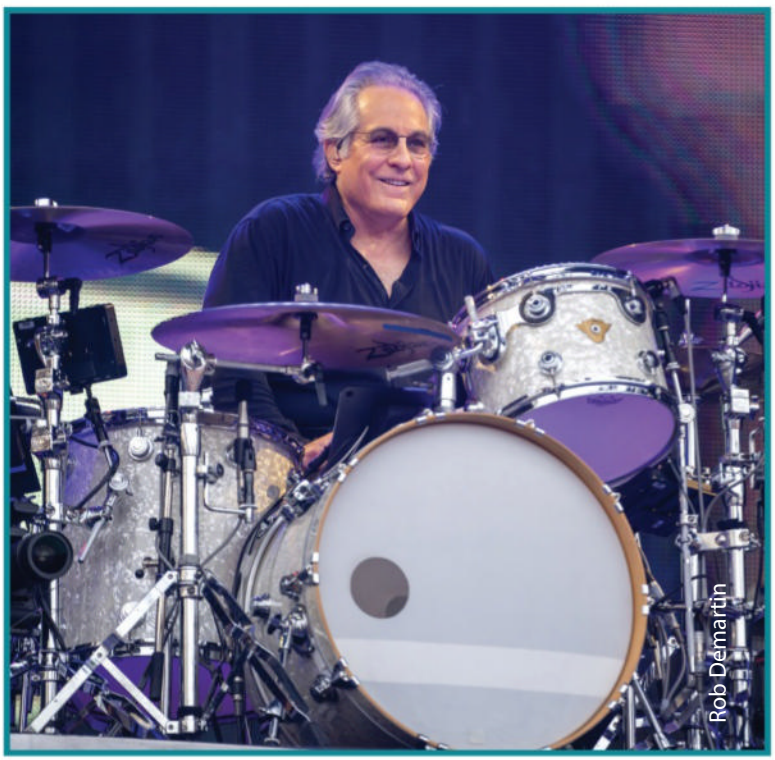
MD: What else did you learn from the late night tv shows experience?

MW: I can tell you one thing, the TV business makes the music business look *honorable*. I'm sort of kidding, but in those days you had to watch your back *if you get the picture*. It was an extremely corporate job, and I loved that part of it when I started (at 42 years of age.) I was ready for that corner office thing. Then at 5:30 you get to show off on TV playing music, and in my case, doing some wild comedy stuff. It was a lot of fun and the closest thing to a real 9 to 5 job that you can imagine a musician doing. My 16 or so years on TV were great!

MD: How did the TV gig affect your drumming?

MW: On an almost daily basis I was exposed to and expected to play all sorts of music with authority and competence. There's a saying, "*Competence is easy to see; incompetence is hard to hide*". Try it on TV with millions of people watching. It was a phenomenal learning experience. Backing up Tony Bennett, for example. That was the most nervous I've ever been, but he loved it and the band nailed his tunes. The job itself challenged me to come up with the goods all the time (musically speaking,) and I was a sponge.

Actually, as we speak I am going through something of a renaissance in my drumming as we tour around the world. If you listen to my playing with Bruce and the E Street Band when we reunited in 1999 and through the early 2000s, I was bringing that sort of complicated approach from the TV show to the E Street Band. It was quite interesting at the time, how quickly certain of the things I was playing didn't quite fit in with the more simple rhythmic approach appropriate to Bruce's material. Today I'm far enough away from the TV experience, and I'm continuing to evolve more as a drummer. It's like growing young again, in a strange way. For this tour we have an 18-piece band, so I have made a conscious decision to continue reinventing myself as a drummer with a big rock band where everything swings, but in a very muscular Bruce Springsteen E Street Band way. I have consciously eliminated a lot of the ornamentation from my drumming. These days I simplify, simplify, simplify! In a 70,000 capacity stadium that approach is much more effective. The groove is always the front and center.


Rob Demartin

MD: What are you eliminating?

MW: The idea of playing the hi-hat in the verse and then going to the splashy ride cymbal on the chorus that we all learned from Ringo. I don't even do that much anymore. If you look at Charlie Watts and how he started doing that little interrupted hi-hat thing late in his career, he was eliminating too. If you listen to his playing up to the *Some Girls* record, he was playing eighths on the hi-hat. He and I talked about it in my book. That was the first reveal of why he did that. He said he did it because Mick and Keith said when you hit the hi-hat at the same time as you hit the back beat you mess up the snare drum sound, so stay off two and four on the hi-hat. Pretty neat trick.

When we first started the E Street Band, we went from playing clubs to theaters to 5,000 seat venues to 20,000 seat basketball arenas. My drumming changed, the bigger the venues got, particularly with the sound systems in those days, and the more you strayed away from the snare drum, bass drum, and hi-hat, the more the drums got lost in the mix. The drums drive the band, but they're not the main interest or the main instrument. Now, as I said, we're playing huge venues and I'm sticking to that approach. I'm playing a lot less fills, and much simpler fills. The ornamentation is unnecessary. Bruce, his manager Jon Landau, and our sound man all noticed that *something* was different. They all asked if I was doing something different. I was pleased to say, "Actually yes, I am doing something different." They all noticed that the band is much more driving now, and I've described to them what I've been doing. It takes conscious effort, I thought about it first and then I came to a realization. If you look at video of the Stones, Charlie very rarely played the ride cymbal. If you look at Charlie's development as a drummer for The Rolling Stones, it evolved. He was phenomenal from the start, he had the same pocket all along, but he played simpler and less splashy as time went on. It's interesting to see how he grew as a musician.

In the nearly 50 years that I have been associated with Bruce and the E Street Band, I'm finding new ways to play these classic songs. As the venues got bigger, I

found it's better to do less than more, it's much more direct. I'm all about getting to the heart of what Bruce's songs are. They're stories. And the band is very much in the show band style, right out of our showmen heroes like Sam & Dave and James Brown.

MD: Aside from this most recent decision, what are some of the other things that Mr. Self-Improvement has done throughout the years to improve?

MW: Well, one of the most intense periods of drumming self-realization and actualization happened when I went into a multi-year period of studying with Joe Morello and Gary Chester during the 1980s. Most of that time was with Joe but I took about six months of lessons from Gary, and it was like joining a monastery. I became singularly focused on becoming a better drummer. Gary's thing was pure Gary (he took no prisoners!) and very difficult for me, particularly when I first started. This was before he came out with his book, and he used the Ralph Pace books in a very interesting way. Those two books were on syncopation and were the Bibles of classical drum teaching. Gary took what was written for the bass drum and snare drum and had you play the snare drum part on the bass drum, and the bass drum part on the snare, while riding with your left hand instead of your right. And you played everything with a very primitive click track. He would have you do all these permutations using those rhythms while the phone was ringing, the dog was running through the room, and his daughter coming in and asking to borrow the car. You were constantly being interrupted and distracted. But that was part of the idea. He wanted to get you to think differently and not let anything distract you.

MD: That's an interesting way to teach concentration.

MW: Seriously! I interviewed Gary for *The Big Beat* and it was a fascinating interview, but I never published the interview. I couldn't use it. Every time I brought up a record he played on, like "Twist & Shout" by The Isley Brothers, or "Tell Him" by The Exciters, he'd just *trash* them. Iconic rock and roll records and he just *hated* them. You know, Gary won one of the Gene Krupa Drum contests in the late 1940s or early 50s and he *wanted* to be Gene Krupa. He became one of the most successful studio drummers in history, but he was never quite satisfied because he didn't become a Buddy Rich or Gene Krupa. I went from studying with Gary to seeking out Joe Morello. I studied with Joe during the early 80s religiously for about three years. He took me right back to being an 8-year-old drum student. He really helped me get my hands and my coordination together.

Another guy who was really important to me during that time was legendary English producer, guitar player, singer-songwriter Dave Edmunds. I always admired his records and he asked me to put a band together for a tour of Japan in 1991. However, once we started rehearsing Dave discovered that he really didn't like the way I played. We really got into it — of course we were playing his songs — but I had an attitude when I was first "criticized".

MD: What was it that he didn't like?

MW: He didn't like that everything I played was eighth notes with the right hand. He hated eighth notes with the right hand, and he exposed me to a whole different way of playing drums. He taught me the English way of playing fast tempos which was to play a real simple quarter or half note bass drum pattern and quarter notes on the hi-hat or ride cymbal. Real splashy. With Bruce it was tight eighth notes and busy, and basically baion bass drum patterns. I went back and listened to Beatles and Zeppelin records and heard them employ Dave's approach. I was in my early 40s, studying with Joe Morello and playing with Dave Edmunds. Dave was coming from a completely different place, and, once I let my defenses down, I realized this is really cool, he was a legendary producer, and he opened my eyes and ears to a whole other way of playing. And, by the way, the tour ended up being a blast.

> Everyone has unlimited potential — but you must seek it out. You have to understand your role in life as an individual, as a citizen, as a spouse, or as a member of a musical group.

MD: You have had an interesting career outside of drumming, can we talk about that?

MW: When the E Street Band "*temporarily*" disbanded for 11 years, I learned that being in a band can be illusory and can be a dangerous position to put yourself in. I've spent the last 42 years as both a drummer and a real estate developer. I had a feel, a tolerance, and a very developed, diligent study of real estate and recognizing how the economic patterns of everyday life can help you or hurt you in that sector. Together with my wife, I am a very active real estate developer which doesn't have a lot to do with my public drumming career. But it's a very important component of my overall life. A large part of diversifying myself and our family was created when at the age of 38 I got a phone call that changed my life forever.

Bruce called and said, "I'm going to do some other things." He never said he was breaking up the band, but we didn't play live together for 11 years. I actually never thought we'd get back together again full time. I probably wouldn't have had the temerity to go for the TV job if I had. My wife, Becky, was pregnant with Jay, we had our 2-year-old daughter Ali depending on us, and suddenly the E Street Band was disbanding. I remembered something that Russ Kunkel said to me in *The Big Beat*. He realized that as a session drummer the only thing he had to fall back on was his ass. I always fell back on the fact that I was a member of a band, but suddenly I wasn't. I had done a few sessions along the way with Meat Loaf, Bonnie Tyler, and Air Supply; but I quickly found out that I wasn't in the "music business," I was in the "E Street Band business." I'll be very honest, I was and still am proud of everything I did, particularly the live work, *The River*, and *Born in the USA*, but I realized that I had staked my life and my family's life on an illusion. While I certainly felt I contributed, Bruce was doing all the heavy lifting. When I say an illusion, I don't specifically mean financially, although that was a component, but it was suddenly, "Who am I?" I did a lot of other things that had nothing to do with drumming and eventually I stopped drumming for three years. I did other things that led to becoming a businessman. I went to law school for a few months, I worked for a record company for a while, I did some public speaking engagements. I felt like *The Spy Left Out in the Cold* (a movie starring Richard Burton.) My task was to dig down and find out what I was made of and how to integrate that into being a family man, raising children, and being home for them.

Then, in 1993 I met Conan O'Brien walking down the street in New York City. I remember watching *The Tonight Show*

with Johnny Carson and remember looking at Ed Shaughnessy and thinking that would be the greatest gig in the world. So not only did I find my way back in from the cold by being the band leader on a late-night TV program, I became a better drummer, I was home by 8:00 o'clock every night, and when we got the NBC 11:30 spot in 2004, I actually saw my name in the same sentence as Doc Severinsen and Skitch Henderson as the band leader for *The Tonight Show*. That blew my mind.

I began my television career as a "faux swing-jazz drummer", and I did that for 16 years, and for 10 of those years I was also playing with Springsteen. I really did have the best of both worlds.

MD: Let's get back to the real estate thing. How many musicians on your level have become diversified in the careers?

MW: I really have no idea- - can't put a number on it, but one of the greatest examples is Sammy Hagar who has taken what could have been a debilitating interest in alcohol and turned it into a billion-dollar business. Gene Krupa, he was an actor, he had his name on books, and he and Cozy Cole started their drum school in the 50s. Frank Ippolito played drums with the Glenn Miller band and invented the FIPS silent drum set. Carmine Appice wrote *Realistic Rock* and got into songwriting, and look at all the educational stuff that Dave Weckl and Dom Famularo have done. I'm sure there are lots of others.

My career is like anyone else's. It's had ups and downs, and just when you think you've got it all wired, there's a short circuit and you must make a left turn. Joe Morello would tell drummers to get themselves an *insurance policy*, which is great advice. Don't limit yourself. But you don't do that just one time and you're done. You keep doing it. You keep adding to your repertoire whether it's songs or skills. Since the year 2000, I look at every E Street Band tour as possibly the last one. If it is, I'll continue playing with my bebop band with Dave Kikoski, and keep playing with my Jukebox Band taking audience requests of 50s, 60s, and 70s songs.

MD: What have you learned from Bruce along the way?

MW: Don't ever take your eyes off the bandleader! Being associated with Bruce Springsteen, Steven Van Zandt and Jon Landau…working with individuals like that, if you don't come away with a sense of what's real, your eyes, ears, and heart just aren't open. Partnering with the incredible Jimmy Vivino on the *Late Night* show. I couldn't help but become a better musician.

Growing up with Bruce and the E Street Band for almost 50 years, and I don't mean just on stage but being in Bruce's life, is a lesson unto itself. You learn to take the gig very seriously, but not take yourself too seriously. We make great music, but in many ways, he's been a father figure, an older brother, a mentor, and he continues to be a friend. In the 90s, after the band had not played together for about two years and I was about to go to law school, we were sitting on the front lawn of his house in LA and he said, "I get it Max, but don't ever stop drumming, you're too good, your heart is too big not to be drumming." That was great advice, and I'm glad I took it.

MD: How have you passed all of these lessons on to your son (Jay Weinberg, drummer of Slipknot)?

MW: You have to remain humble. You have got to know yourself, and vigilantly apply yourself to the task set before you. Everyone has unlimited potential — but you must seek it out. You have to understand your role in life as an individual, as a citizen, as a spouse, or as a member of a musical group. You must be realistic and honest to the depth of your soul about who you are.

I can define my life before August 20th, 1974. That is the day I met Bruce, Clarence Clemons, Gary Talent, and Danny Federici. Everything I had done prior to that point, from watching Xavier Cugat on TV, to seeing those Broadway shows— Everything I had done for those 17 years led me to that moment. But you must remain humble and to accomplish that you have to perform, do the job, and seek out excellence. With Bruce I am part of an ensemble, so when I'm leading my own bands, I know how musicians want to be treated. I'm treated great, so I treat everybody I play with great. I want them to not only have a great musical experience but to feel that I'll take care of them as people have taken care of me. As I said earlier, 2024 will mark my 50th year with Bruce and the band, and it's both a business and a fraternity. When we go on stage it's a special place, and we are giving you the best of what we have, and that's something we've all learned from Bruce.

Bruce has a saying, "You always gotta watch out for the curves." I suppose that's one of the pieces of advice I've given Jay through the years. Expect the unexpected. His drumming speaks for itself, but more importantly he is a very serious and outstanding citizen, and he takes that very seriously. Jay is the most logical person you'll ever meet, he's like a Vulcan with a huge heart! He is as sweet and as disciplined as he always has been, and he's always watching out for the curves.

Check out Max's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

Anthony Scanga

Jay Weinberg

Anthony Scanga

KNOT Just A New Generation

By Mark Griffith

Whether you are a fan of Slipknot or not; if you think that you know drummer Jay Weinberg? I *guarantee* you that you don't! At the age of 32, his life (so far) reads like a movie, and he's just getting started. The recipient of "Best Metal Drummer" and "#1 Rock Drummer" in the 2017, 2020, 2022, and 2023 Modern Drummer Readers Polls, Jay is one of the most intelligent, enthusiastic, and "together" people in rock 'n' roll. There is a lot going on "behind the mask," and behind some of the most brutal music in metal. Clear your mind of any pre-conceptions and get ready to learn.

MD: You went to a small college called Stevens Institute of Technology, which is the New Jersey equivalent of MIT, so you must be a very smart guy. How does a smart guy from Stevens wind up in Slipknot and being one of the best heavy metal drummers of today?

JW: I'm fortunate to have had very encouraging parents — within the world of music, and just in general. My mom was a history teacher, so education was very important to her when I was growing up. The E Street Band got back together in 1999, when I was in third grade, so my parents took my sister and me on tour, and my mom road schooled us. Her father was an educator who was in the Signal Corps in WWII, so she grew up on Fort Monmouth. I suppose being a scholastic Drill Sergeant came naturally to her (laughs). She did not let up on us — in fact, despite it being an amazing and fun opportunity to travel the world with a rock band at that young age, road school felt significantly tougher than actually being *at* school. Every day at 6:00 AM, I'd jump right into quizzes, homework, tests — a full-on course load. Once I'd finished my studies for the day, we'd go to an art gallery and take in the culture of whatever city we happened to be in. Then at night, we'd go watch Bruce and The E Street Band kill it for four hours. Wake up the next day in a new city and do it all over again.

MD: I can't imagine being nine years old as a sponge for all those stimuli.

JW: Yeah, every day was a full-on "classroom" education, art education, and music education wrapped into one experience. I'm incredibly lucky to have grown up in a family that valued all those things equally.

I decided to attend Stevens, not only because it's a great school in its own right, but it's right across the Hudson River from New York City. I knew that I'd have the opportunity to pursue my education, and that on any given night I could go to a show or an art gallery in New York and take full advantage of being close to the city in that way. Absorbing all the music and culture that I could was a natural calling to me.

I suppose the "normal" college life began in the Fall of 2008 and took a drastic turn about two months into my freshman year at Stevens. That's when Bruce called and asked if I would fill in for my dad while he fulfilled his duties on the brand-new *Tonight Show*. I didn't want to leave school altogether, since I was enjoying it up to that point, but I knew I couldn't pass up this opportunity of a lifetime. I basically asked the school if I could take my studies on the road…perhaps I could write essays on subjects instead of needing to be present to take in-class tests, things like that. Since Stevens is a smaller school, I believe they were able to zoom out a bit and recognize that this was a pretty unique circumstance for a new student, and that they wanted to foster whatever that might lead to. We operated on a handshake deal; if I could demonstrate the ability to balance both a full-time college education with a full-time touring schedule — and if I kept meeting the benchmarks of my school responsibilities — they would allow it. To their credit, they took a real shot on me, and that's essentially what I did for my first two and a half years in college. Fast-forwarding a bit, the E Street tour was a success and came to its natural conclusion…but that meant it was now up to me to *use* that life-changing experience in some way that would push myself musically.

That manifested in me joining a hardcore band from New York called Madball in 2010, and subsequently joining a punk band who were friends of mine called Against Me! in 2011. Right after I joined Against Me!, we were on tour for nearly nine straight months. That was a far more densely packed schedule than my experience with Bruce, which is exactly the kind of on-tour immersion I was seeking. But that did lead to some significant burnout on the school side of things since I was still engaged full-time as a student. It quickly became clear that I couldn't balance both rigorous schedules, and something had to give.

I remember being in our van doing an online quiz on my BlackBerry on a drive from El Paso to Anaheim. I think I spent like five hours on it, and I pressed "submit" while were in the desert without proper cell service…literally all my work vanished instantly. I finally cracked (laughs). I called my school from the parking lot of the club we were playing that night and admitted to the Dean that I officially couldn't continue balancing school with touring, and that I'd decided to put school on hold to concentrate on touring full-time. They understood that this was my lifelong passion, and said I wouldn't have to re-apply to resume my studies if and when I wanted to come back.

> …going to college doesn't have to be only learning arbitrary stuff. You can use it to study and navigate the inner workings of what you want your life to be. I graduated in 2013, and it's been 10 years of me applying the knowledge gained from the tandem experience of being a full-time student and a full-time touring musician that has led me down a fulfilling life path so far.

I returned about a year and a half later to finish up my degree; actually taking an overload of courses between Stevens and some classes at NYU to accelerate the timeframe for my graduation. At the same time, I also started pursuing an informal education in oil painting. Looking back, it was the symbiotic relationship that these experiences in music, art, and education that allowed me to tailor my studies to my passions. For example, I focused my Senior Design project on building a boutique art gallery from the ground up and putting on an art show — which I've now done in a professional capacity with my own artwork. Punk rock fostered a DIY mentality in me that gave me the tools and confidence to learn as I went, and Stevens helped sharpen those skills which have led to great, fulfilling artistic projects. Partnering with SJC Custom Drums (whom I endorse) is a great example of that. Creating my own signature drums, completely under my own design with my own artwork, has been an amazing way to bring together my passions for drums and art.

So, my experience at Stevens was wholly positive, for sure. It proved to me that going to college doesn't have to

be *only* learning arbitrary stuff. You can use it to study and navigate the inner workings of what you want your life to be. I graduated in 2013, and it's been 10 years of me applying the knowledge gained from the tandem experience of being a full-time student and a full-time touring musician that has led me down a fulfilling life path so far. In fact, it's quite fitting that the day that I finished my very last exam at Stevens, was the day that I got a mysterious text message to come out to *some studio* and audition for *some band*. That ended up being Slipknot.

MD: Upon listening to the new Slipknot music, it sounds to me like things are changing a bit. You are sounding amazing, but the music seems to be a little different.

JW: That could be the case! (laughs) I'm not quite sure if I'm able to hear it in that way. I'm sort of too close to it to listen with much objectivity. However, I learned right away as I was jumping onto the moving freight train of Slipknot, that it's a constantly changing thing. The focus of the band has always been that we don't want to repeat what we have done before. When I joined, we were embarking on creating the band's fifth full-length album; the circumstances and this renewed sense of vitality within the band felt like it organically led to a lot of experimentation. Now that we're almost ten years further down that road, our newest record *The End, So Far* feels like an even more extreme embodiment of that experimentation, in many ways. It's got that signature Slipknot energy and fury; I don't think we'll ever get away from that…but this album sure has a lot of swings in new directions. It's definitely the byproduct of pushing ourselves into different, non-repetitive directions.

MD: There is more space on this record, and your sense of groove is really coming through.

JW: Thank you. The more expansive material, the slow burn stuff, has been coming to us very naturally. It's not necessarily something we discuss, or even consciously think about, but I think we're pretty reactionary to what's happening around us. That might be showing through in some musical ways. It often feels like we "zig" when everybody else "zags." It's that innate pressure to do something that we haven't done, or maybe something that separates us from our peer group.

I quite like the song "Acidic" from our new record, that's a great example of that mentality. It's totally out of left field. It's a very groovy, stoner, dirty-desert-rock song that is very different for Slipknot, but we like that. We enjoy it when our audience puts on a pair of headphones and wonders, 'What am I listening to? Is this the same band?' I think we all get a kick out of that. As far as the direction that this whole record took us, that definitely surprised me. I like when we take chances like that. More often than not, I feel like there's an artistic satisfaction in accomplishing something like that.

Anthony Scanga

MD: With so many guys in the band, and so much happening musically and sonically, how do you find the sonic space for your drum parts?

JW: That's simple, I just ask our producer to make my drums louder! (laughs) I'm joking, of course. However, understanding that everybody wants every detail to be heard is important. That's definitely a creative challenge with Slipknot. It's a delicate balance to find space for drums, bass, guitars, a DJ, samples, vocals, percussion elements…and not have it turn out a noisy mess. As the drummer, I need to sift through a song and really pick my moments. In the mixing phase, once I've blasted all my energy on the drums, and we've recorded everything and I'm happy with the performance, then it becomes more of a collaboration between myself and our co-producer who also mixes the record. In the case of *The End, So Far,* that's the incredible Joe Barresi.

In post-production, we all contribute our mixing notes. For example, I might hone in on a series of ghost notes that I feel is important to the flow of that musical part. In a way, I'll sort of make my case for *why* this little ghost note is important to me and *why* I feel it serves this part of the song. I'll do the same thing for, say, a tom fill that emphasizes or dances around the guitar or the vocal in some way, that might get lost in the balance of the other instruments if it's not addressed. Those are the moments where I enter the ring of making my case for my sonic space. At times, it feels like presenting my case to a "jury of peers" — my bandmates and our co-producer — and diplomatically pitching those ideas. All in the spirit of collaboration and finding out what's appropriate for the song, of course. In all aspects, not just from the drumming perspective, there's a lot of sacrifice. Sometimes none of us get "our way" — and that's perfectly fine. We're all very detail oriented and obsessive in the studio, so it helps to come to the project with passion for what you're contributing to any song, or to the album as a whole. I'm only going to fight for a specific ghost note because I truly *believe* and *care* about that ghost note (laughs). We might butt heads about it, but that's all part of the "iron sharpens iron" mentality we seem to take with everything we do.

With that said, it's nearly the opposite

once we hit the stage. That's my favorite part. The records are great, and enjoyable to make, but on stage is where we truly come alive — everybody duking it out for that sonic space, as a cohesive unit. I appreciate the democracy of recording, but our stage is just full-blown chaos and anarchy; deliberate, intentional, and controlled, but still chaos. We're not a band that plays to any backing tracks, we don't play to a click. Everything you hear from us is all played by us *in that moment*. That's important to us because it allows us to take what we've learned in the studio and deliver the most human-feeling impact to our audience. Making our records is a thorough, hyper-experimental process — like taking lessons in school, as we've touched on. Bringing that music on stage is our way of using those lessons to make a bigger impact on stage.

MD: Do you record with a click?

JW: Sometimes. It's on a case-by-case basis. It depends how prepared we are, going into a session. If we're building songs while we're recording, we might create more of a map with deliberate tempo shifts that suit the flow of a song. We'll often do that if we're still working out what direction a song is going to take.

For our album *We Are Not Your Kind*, we spent three years writing, arranging, and recording those songs, and we intentionally wanted to record it live like we play on stage, with no click. We started by getting a deep understanding of those songs, practicing them as a core group — to the point where we didn't need road maps, or to play along with any pre-recorded guitar track or vocal tracks. That was important to us, and we did that for every song; that's what you hear on that record. Conversely, our album before that, *.5: The Gray Chapter* was built in stages, so a lot of that was set to a click. Barn-burner songs on *The End, So Far* like "Hive Mind" and "H377" were done without a click, yet the more expansive and slower songs were done to a click. It's always an array of whatever works best. If a song is built around a loop, that typically needs to be set to a click. But once we get on stage and decide to play that stuff live, all of that goes out the window and we have to figure out how to approach it organically, not mechanically.

For instance, we're debuting a new song that we've never played before called "Yen" on our upcoming European Tour. It's a song where there are a bunch of loops and layered drum parts. We're having conversations now of how we need to deconstruct certain parts because we're not going to play it to a click. We might need to chop up an effected keyboard melody into individual notes, rather than it be a loop. We like to keep things organic like that. That's not to say we'd ever be entirely opposed to playing with a click live, but it does tend to give us the feeling like we're "on a leash" in some ways. Slipknot is just a beast that cannot be contained on a leash…it's a rabid animal that runs wild. If we feel like we're on a leash, we feel restricted. We pride ourselves on the fact that nothing is prerecorded, preplayed or anything like that. We never want to use technology as a crutch, only as a tool to enhance what we're doing. Personally, I prefer for our on-stage experience to showcase us listening to *each other* on stage, not a predetermined roadmap of how the song goes. I want to listen to Jim, Mick, and Vman on the strings, or Corey's vocals — and how our chemistry feels *in that moment* — and use that to create that wild and chaotic "one of one" live experience.

> The records are great, and enjoyable to make, but on stage is where we truly come alive — everybody duking it out for that sonic space, as a cohesive unit.

MD: Slipknot doesn't tie your live production to the click?

JW: Not at all — that's a testament to our amazing production team. They perform all the lights, pyro, video, and mixing cues in real time with those musical moments; that's a testament to how good they are. They play their production elements like instruments.

When it comes to the *feel* of any musical part, I sort of visualize transitioning between parts like drawing back a slingshot. I can heighten the drama of an impactful moment by leaning back into the pocket and then shooting forward like a slingshot. Of course, those are things that you can do by dancing around the click, but I do prefer it to be spur-of-the-moment and unleashed. When we really nail a moment like that, I feel it showcases our special musical chemistry. It feels uniquely "us."

If you juxtapose that to how I played with Bruce, it's wild. That touring experience was my first time ever playing live with a click. But I had a technological catch that was very advantageous; I could change the tempo at *will* based on how Bruce was feeling that night. He would count off or start any song, and I'd hit a pedal that would signal to my tech to match the metronome in my in-ears to what Bruce was playing, because *that* was going to be the tempo — no matter if we had played it at a slightly different tempo the night before. Bruce wants it where he wants it, because he's feeling the "temperature of the moment," as we refer to it in Slipknot. My tech would tap the tempo to match him, and I'd kick the click on at will with another button a few second later. My dad uses the same exact system with Bruce today. So, it was kind of the best of both worlds — my time never wavered, *and* the music had the urgency and tone of the live moment. Bruce's music needs that foundation and that bedrock of steadiness, whereas with Slipknot, the vibe is so frenetic that it feels as if the train could fall off the tracks at any moment…but it doesn't. In my position, I like controlling those elements of drama, of tension and release. You never 100% know what's going to happen, and it keeps you on your toes.

I prefer to hear the humanity in music. When I watch any of my favorite bands live, I can tell they're so in sync and tight with each other because they are *listening* to each other. That's the magic of being in the garage creating this messed up noise that is yours and yours alone. You're responding to your mutual chemistry, not to other stimuli that is set in stone. We've been on tour with bands that have had their computer go down and they've had to cancel their show. That's inconceivable to me. You can't let technology run your life to that extent. Slipknot has virtually no technology, we're nearly all-analog. I feel like we're in line with my favorite punk bands in that respect. Warts and all, however messed up it's gonna sound, it's going to sound like *us*. I think we celebrate that more than we shy away from it.

MD: Music is a conversation, and who wants to have somebody in the background dictating the pace of the conversation.

JW: That's a great way of putting it, I like that.

MD: When I'm hearing you live or on

record, how much how are you triggering?

JW: Only a little bit live, not at all on record. Except for about 30% of my live bass drum sound, I use no triggers at all. And truthfully, I was very hesitant to even do *that* with the kicks. I wanted it to be all natural. Ultimately, we are such a sonically-dense band that it's hard for high-end attack to not to get lost in a live mix — especially when environmental factors like the venue or PA are out of your control. It helps keep the live sound consistent, so I got comfortable with making that adjustment in 2019 or so. Plus, our Front of House guy Bob Strakele is one of my favorite live mixers. I trust any suggestion he brings my way to serve how we sound out front, and he was instrumental in setting up how we blend my kick mics and triggers to feel as organic as possible.

When it comes to samples in general, I learned throughout COVID what a great tool it is to have sample libraries and virtual instruments for our demo-ing phase. While we were putting together *The End, So Far,* I had to learn to become somewhat of a self-recorder / self-producer at home as I demo'd drums on my Roland V-Drum kit. That process is actually what inspired me to create my own authentic, signature virtual instrument with Mixwave. In the past, I didn't feel comfortable and confident enough to put that out into the world, but I'm really stoked that it's been so well-received. Recording every single velocity hit myself to create a well-rounded representation of my drum sound was a huge undertaking. Alongside my tech Justin Nace expertly tuning the drums, and the team at Mixwave creating the software, we created a virtual instrument I'm incredibly proud of. It's an insanely comprehensive representation of my sound, with nine snares, multiple kick and beater options, my entire cymbal arsenal — even my dog is sampled as a playable, multi-velocity piece! (laughs) Presenting it to musicians who might identify with my drum sound, so that they can use it in their own creations, has been a huge honor.

MD: You are playing drums with two percussionists, and a DJ, which is like another drummer on stage. Speaking of sonic space, how do you guys "assign" the percussive space?

JW: All of our percussive elements form a very robust percussive assault. I imagine it comes off as very chaotic and wild at times, but it is very deliberate and super locked-in. Sid (Slipknot's DJ) comes from the jungle and rave scene of the 90s. When Slipknot first formed, it was more guitar, bass, vocals, and drums-based. But then they heard about this DJ in Des Moines, doing this wild, jungle-beat stuff by taking Art Blakey and Roy Haynes bebop stuff and speeding it up to where it sounds like it's on PCP at 4:00 AM raves. To my understanding, the band thought, "Whatever that crazy noise is about, that's gotta be in the band!" The weird sounds and cool noise that he's making is a defining element of Slipknot's sound.

Anthony Scanga

And even that's evolved beyond just the primitive jungle DJ scratching. He creates melodies and inserts another rhythmic element that's completely in its own sonic lane. This is the first band that I've ever been in where the relationship to rhythm is that deep. It feels like this giant swirling thing that I'm just one part of — when we all land on the "one," it's magic.

MD: As a percussion section, how do you guys create and weave your parts? Is there a lot of deliberate orchestration?

JW: I'm glad you asked that, because that was actually a specific subject that came up when I first joined the band. Clown (Slipknot percussionist) is one of the OG founders of the band. On our second day playing together, we started working on demos that Jim had been working on because they needed to make sure we could collaborate well. It was much further beyond just being able to play songs from the band's four previous albums. It was, "Can you write with us? Can you arrange with us?" That was a huge element. As we were putting together "Sarcastrophe" — which ended up being the first full-band song on the record — I was excitedly coming up with drum ideas and asking Clown, "What if you were on the keg or the toms doing THIS… He said, *"I'll stop you right there. You find the space you're gonna occupy in the song without any regard for what anybody else is gonna do. You fill up all the space that you can…you be as BIG as you can be within the song. Try your best to push us (the percussionists) out, and we'll find our own way in."*

MD: Wow!

JW: I know! It was helpful to realize that my role within Slipknot is to create the rhythmic base and the accents that need to be there, so the percussionists have the leeway to layer call-and-response types of rhythms. Clown always says, *"The percussion is always out on four."* Typically, when a drum fill is going into another section, I'll start the fill on beat four — he'll rest while I do a crazy fill, and then he

comes back in on the one. There's a lot of complementary stuff like that going on. Sometimes they're accenting my snare in time, other times they dance around what I'm doing. I don't really have any input in that, we like to just stay out of each other's way, even though we are all creating this drum noise that's coming at you. We like to have a complementary dynamic of what we're doing and leave it relatively unspoken. Through that nonverbal communication comes this collaboration where we're not even talking about it, but we understand how it flows together. It comes from years of listening to each other.

The End, So Far is our first record with Michael Pfaff on percussion, he has a background in music that is totally unique from the rest of us. He's a classically trained marimba player, among other things. Because of him, there are even more instances where we can stretch out of our comfort zone, based on all the stuff that he's doing. Things like that help make this record the most different Slipknot record that we've ever made. It's tough to predict if that experimental trajectory will continue…from here, we might do a 180 and make a straight death metal record, who knows! But having that talent and fresh energy from a guy who approaches music totally differently feels similar to when I joined the band ten years ago. When I joined, that was the band stepping in a new direction. I can really appreciate how it helps to branch out into new sonic spaces as a band. That's a pretty cool thing to do 25 years into Slipknot's history.

MD: You come from more of a punk background, but it's more than *just* punk?

JW: I think it's an amalgamation of music from all ends of different spectrums, to be honest. Punk rock, hardcore, and heavy metal certainly captured my heart when it came to the style of music that inspired me to pick up drumsticks. But I can't discredit the influence of classical music, or artists from a wide array of genres that all combine to feel like *my* background: Interpol, My Bloody Valentine, Edith Piaf… music you wouldn't categorize as punk or metal, but they inform how I approach music as a whole, for sure. I started playing when I was about 14, and when I started my first band in high school, we were as into the Misfits and the Ramones as we were into Mastodon and Slayer. We were punk rockers with ambitions of being able to speak eloquently on our instruments, and not just playing four chords.

I've always had huge love and respect for heavy music with distorted guitars and screaming vocals, but I always liked the direct approach of punk rock where there was virtually no barrier to enter. It didn't matter if you weren't a virtuoso on your instrument; if you had energy, drive, and commitment, you could do it. That's how I have always liked approaching heavy metal, and especially Slipknot. I approach how we shape songs within Slipknot as we're playing complicated music with proficiency…but with a punk rock attitude of going for it with 100% energy and complete abandon. I responded to this band from a soul-and-gut level when I was just a fan. The songs made a beeline for my heart and affected me in the same way that punk rock affected me. Punk rock gave me the education of, 'If you want to do something, you don't have to wait around until someone teaches you, or until you practice in your basement until you're proficient. You can go out and make your life happen for yourself NOW.' That's the lifelong lesson and gift that Johnny Ramone and Joe Strummer gave us, you know?

When I got my first touring opportunity, it was literally my family who I'd known forever, asking me to cover for my dad because he had a scheduling conflict between the TV show and the Bruce tour. I had only been playing drums for about three years, but Bruce, Steve Van Zandt, and my dad saw within me the unrelenting drive of a guy who sets a goal and will do whatever it takes — perhaps to a psychotic degree — to achieve it. They took a *big* chance on me, but through my enthusiasm, my willingness to learn and

Justin Nance

apply myself, I learned the ropes of being a touring musician. They kicked me into the deep end of rock and roll, playing for 80,000 people a night and having to know how to pull from literally hundreds of Bruce's songs at any given moment. And I'm very thankful for it.

MD: How did you know (or learn) all of Bruce's music?

JW: As a young person, I watched them all the time. I just learned by watching them, honestly. Truthfully, there were many songs that I played on that tour which I had never actually sat down and played. Of course, my involvement with the E Street Band came to its natural conclusion after a year when my dad came back from *The Tonight Show*…but I felt in my heart that was just the beginning of this journey on which I had found myself. I had so much more that I wanted to do with my life in music, so I broke it back down to the basic elements of playing in punk and hardcore bands — my comfort zone, really. It all just happened after this totally insane thing with the E Street Band. That does bring me back to the first MD cover story that my dad and I shared in 2009 — it preceded all of the things that I wanted to do with a life in music.

From there, I just kept putting one foot in front of the other. When I joined Slipknot, they had an understanding of who I was. We had been friends since I was 10 years old. When I first started going to Slipknot shows, they were the first group of people who didn't treat me like "just a kid," even though they were all 20 years older than me. They treated me like a peer, and that meant so much to me. What they were creating resonated within me at a young age, and they recognized that. It always felt like we saw music and art eye to eye, despite our age difference. That's true to this day, honestly, and I've always respected that.

Thirteen years into our friendship, they needed a drummer and they hit me up, saying, *"You're like family to us, we don't really see this happening with anybody else, so can you play with us?"* We got together and it felt totally perfect. I think them approaching me was loosely-based on their knowledge that if I could wrap my head around the position (and insane pressure) of playing with Bruce as my first experience out of high school when I was 17, then the accelerated learning curve of joining Slipknot when I was 23 could work. That, and they knew from our friendship that I had studied every facet of the band and its music for 12 years. They took that chance on me, and I'm incredibly grateful, as it's led to so many memorable moments over the last ten years. I can honestly tell you that there is no greater rock'n'roll pressure than being in Slipknot. I've never experienced anything to this degree. It's the most intense musical experience of my life, on and off stage.

MD: Deconstruct the process of joining Slipknot.

JW: It was surreal. It's well documented that I first met the band soon after they made their television debut in 2000 on the *Late Night* show. Their performance was so impressive, my dad had the presence of mind to approach them and introduce himself — basically to say, *"You guys are crazy…my kid's going to LOVE you guys!"* (laughs). They generously invited us to a show in the summer of 2001 when they came back to our area, and we began our friendship right there. Eleven years later, I was in Against Me! and we were in search of a management company to help us out. Just by sheer coincidence, we teamed up with Slipknot's management — I distinctly remember telling them, "This is so crazy. I remember you guys from coming to Slipknot shows all those years ago, and now we're working together!"

I ended up going back to college to finish up my degree not long after that, but the band's manager reached back out and asked me to come to "*a studio*" and audition for "*a band.*" He couldn't tell me what band it was for, but he asked me to just trust him — that this was something this band wanted me to do, that he felt I would be good at, and something that I would *want* to do…I just had to get on a plane and jump down the rabbit hole.

I learned that I was auditioning for Slipknot as I entered the front door, that's no exaggeration. I was the first person in the world to find out that they needed a drummer. It was a very big change for the band, and they wanted to treat it with a delicate respect. I didn't have any information, I had no time to prepare… it wasn't, *"Hey, learn these 20 songs and come out next week to jam with us!"* It was the polar opposite, I was completely in the dark. I showed up, and I was basically told *"Alright…there's a drumset over there. You're going to audition for Slipknot in 20 minutes. Good luck."* The guys came in and basically said, *"We know you as a friend and as a brother…do you know any of our songs?"* In the space of a second, I had to transport right myself back to when I was 14, teaching myself to play drums and internalizing those albums. "Hell yeah!" was the only reasonable answer I could come up with (laughs). I sort of put a coin in this Slipknot jukebox and we were off to the races, right then and there. It would have been rough around the edges, but I like to think we could have played a show that night. I think Jim actually has the recording of it, it was on the old Sound City board they used on their second record. That was super cool.

The first record that I learned to play along to was the Ramones' *It's Alive*. In my opinion, that's the best live album of all time. Once I developed the faculty of playing along to the fast Tommy Ramone stuff, I moved on to Metallica's *Master of Puppets*, which led me to *Reign in Blood*,

JAY'S DRUMSET SPECS

Drumsv SJC Custom with custom artwork by Jay Weinberg, "M5" Maple Shells:
(2) 14" x 22" kick
6.5" x 14" 48-ply snare drum
8" x 10" tom
8" x 12" tom
9" x 13" tom
16" x 16" tom
18" x 18" tom

Cymbals: Zildjian
10" K Custom Hybrid Splash
14" A Custom Hi-Hats
18" Ultra Hammered China
20" A Custom Crash
8" ReZo Splash
10" Oriental China
8" EFX Bell
20" A Custom Crash
18" Ultra Hammered China
21" S Rock Ride
13" A Custom Hi-Hats
22" Crash of Doom.

Hardware and Pedals: Drum Workshop

Sticks: Vater Jay Weinberg Signature 908 sticks

Heads: Evans

Cameras: GoPro

Microphones: Shure, Audix, Beyer, Neumann, Audio Technica

Internal Mic Mount: Randall May

In-Ear Monitors: Jerry Harvey Audio

Cases: Humes & Berg Enduro Drum Cases

Electronics: Roland TD-50 set and module (Backstage Jam Room.)

which led me to play along to the first three Slipknot records, so on and so forth. It's the classic story of a kid in a room with a CD player pretending he's in his favorite band, learning how to be like his favorite drummers. So, when I showed up on that day, I was going strictly on muscle memory from almost ten years prior. I was just trying to transport myself back ten years to when I was teaching myself how to play these songs, and this style of music in general. It was very similar to how I had internalized all of those Bruce songs throughout my childhood, only to recite them by memory on stage years later.

Drummers who come into existing bands can probably relate to this. When you're coming into a band where you weren't a part of the genesis of a song an album, you have to find your own identity within that context. You have to identify *how* a song spoke to you as a listener, understand where the song came from, and *why* it was created in that way. Those musical moments — the key "air drumming" moments, really — need to be represented. But I can't approach a song that I had no part in creating in the exact same way it was created. When I was filling in for my dad with the E Street Band, I was playing his songs totally differently than how he had played them. But there was a *magic* to that. There was a new energy, and a reimagined delivery of the drum part. It was interesting, and it helped things evolve 40 years down the road. That was my approach to Slipknot. Now we've done three albums together, and we've played all the older stuff live for ten years. They wanted someone who could insert his own personality and have that come across as genuine; I knew on that first day that was the basis for my role within the band. Our fans are intelligent, and the most passionate fans in the world. The people who listen to our music know when it's not genuine, and if it's not coming from your heart. That's how I learned the delicate dance of supporting the structure of the song, but doing it in my own way. I feel like that yields like the best, most honest results.

Anthony Scanga

MD: When you were auditioning for the band, how well did you remember and play the tunes, since you hadn't really played them since you were a kid?

JW: Truthfully, my first thought was, "This probably won't go any further beyond today…so just enjoy this moment, playing these songs that meant a lot to you growing up." It was my belief that, if this band is in search of a drummer, they've *earned* the right to expect whoever it is that they ask to come in, to play the entire back catalog, and be prepared to collaborate on new material — all with zero advance notice or preparation. I had to convince myself that I wasn't going to let anybody else be that drummer but me. Whatever that took, and whatever that meant. They were in a difficult position. They were moving on from a brother with whom they started the band, to welcoming a new brother into the band. I had to approach it with respect for how heavy that moment was. But I couldn't just come in and approach it timidly or half-heartedly. I had to decide in that moment that our musical chemistry would be undeniable. I was going to impress upon them that the significance of them asking me to play with them that day was not lost on me. That my responsibility to that moment and to the band was my sole focus. It still is, to this day.

MD: In your 10 years in the band, what have you brought to the band?

JW: Well, I felt like I had a lot to prove at the beginning, that's for sure. Before Slipknot, I had never been in a "metal" band such as this. I came up in the punk and hardcore world, but I was obsessed with listening to all styles of music, including Slipknot. Ever since I was a teenager, one of my favorite things to do has been to sit down and play along to an entire record, start to finish. Those records were completely formative for me, in that way. But making that jump to joining the band was an enormous step.

We spent almost a solid year making *.5: The Gray Chapter*, my first Slipknot album. They were learning how I was in the studio, and I was definitely under an intense microscope, to say the least. I

come from a different musical lexicon. We are different generations. I'm the youngest member in the band, by far. At the time when I joined, I was 23 and the next guy youngest guy was 38. We have a lot in common, but, as far as source inspirations, they seemed to draw more from the 70s and 80s, and I'm drawing more from 90s and early 00s for my root references to heavy music. My youthful enthusiasm and musical encyclopedia stems from bands like Converge, Neurosis, and Bad Religion — that's a little different to what they grew up with. When we finally hit the stage after the year of making that first record together, I think the guys got a sense of my musical background, and how that fits into what we do. I felt the heat of the moment to push forward, while maintaining that tightness. It's never something we've spoken about, but I've always understood that the intent of Slipknot is maximum impact, while having a natural and organic tightness. My instruction was to go for broke on every single song, and that's still my responsibility within the band. After ten years, I still want to make the guys in the band proud of making what hopefully they'd consider to be the "right" choice, trusting me and inviting me into Slipknot.

MD: Do you think that you have developed a voice at the drums?

JW: Perhaps! I hope so…or at least that I'm on a path to developing it. It's always a work in progress, isn't it? It's the hardest thing in life, to be patient. With the enthusiasm that we have when we're young, we want to be "the man" right now. But we gotta understand that the guys who we looked up to did a lot of shedding, and developed their sounds over time by combining many influences into something unique and interesting. To me it's always about casting a wide net of inspiration. I'm equally inspired by Thomas Pridgen, Dave Lombardo, Charlie Drayton, Levon Helm, Danny Carey, Travis Barker, Ben Koller, Billy Cobham, Ginger Baker, Brann Dailor, Keith Moon, Bernard Purdie, my dad…the list goes on and on forever. You always want to develop a unique voice. You start to find your voice when you start to shed those specific influences and filter everything through all your hours on the drums. It's not about reinventing the wheel. I'm trying to produce the creative energy that's true to myself, true to my bandmates and to the music we're making together. But that comes through time, application, and dedication. I've never approached drums as a thing that's a chore, or something I *have* to do. It's something I *want* to do, and that I *get* to do. It's a lifelong pursuit and obsession. It's taken me nearly 20 years for me to arrive at a place today where I feel like I'm finally at the starting line, and that's exciting to me. Because that means I have so much more to learn, explore, and create.

MD: You've mentioned the word "obsessed." Can you describe your healthy obsessive process?

JW: I don't know anybody in the musical community who's made it to where music is what they do every day, who *doesn't* have an obsessive quality and approach to music. Everybody's all in, it's a beautiful thing. This is our life. That obsession gives us a reason to wake up every day, and it's because we love music so much. Over the last ten years music has occupied every second of every day. If I'm not actively playing it, I'm thinking about it. That's not a unique story, but music has been the most meaningful undertaking of my life. There's no time that I really turn "off," but that obsessiveness does become difficult for my family (laughs). I'm trying to get better at that, but I think that's a symptomatic touchstone of obsession that you need. That's what makes a tangible difference and allows you to commit to — and be a part of — something that's worth writing home about.

But we gotta understand that the guys who we looked up to did a lot of shedding, and developed their sounds over time by combining many influences into something unique and interesting. To me it's always about casting a wide net of inspiration.

I look at obsession like any professional athlete. I'm a big hockey fan. Those guys will put their bodies on the line, to achieve their goal of winning a championship. That's kind of how I look at every day as a musician. When we were working on our newest record, I was obsessing to deliver the best representation of what I can do in this band. That month as I was demo-ing material, I probably slept three hours a night because I was either actively creating, or obsessing about what I was creating. Maybe that is the unhealthy side of being obsessed, but that's a temporary thing. I hesitate to consider what I do a "career" because that insinuates a "job." If you find something you love and do it all the time, it's not your job, it's your life. Although, admittedly, I do have to learn to make certain distinctions, and find a better art-work-life-balance when I'm working on something. Burnout isn't good for anybody; it's definitely not good for the art, in the long run. I'll give you a good example…

I've been wanting to share more drum cams on my YouTube page, just because it's a fun way of providing a different angle of our live experience to our audience. So I'm putting together and giving people the ability to watch at least one video of *every* song I've ever played live with Slipknot. Of course, that means choosing the best overall video of each song. That means finding the best performance, video quality, audio, edits, and mixes. Before I know it, a month goes by, and I haven't slept because I'm editing eight different camera angles and making it a whole theatrical thing (laughs). I've gotten obsessed with making these videos available because it's just another avenue to be creative, keep myself busy, and connect with our audience.

I'm so lucky and fortunate to be able to pursue music to this degree, because I know many talented musicians who aren't able to commit 100% of their day to their music. I want to show my gratitude for that opportunity by sharing my enthusiasm, so it makes a connection. Music is all about connection. Connecting to my bandmates first and foremost, to the music, and to our audience. Playing music requires everything you've got. It's healthy to let something positive like music or art envelop your soul, and to invest every fiber of your being into pushing it forward — leaving the world a better place by contributing music to it. After 18 years, I finally feel like I've found a voice in all of my music and visual art. It seems to have formed a symbiotic relationship and it's all seeming to come together. I'm just seeing where it takes me.

jayweinbergofficial.com

Check out Jay's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

drums
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SLASH
FEATURING
MYLES KENNEDY
AND THE CONSPIRATORS
REMO

Ilya Mirman

Brent Fitz

His Inspiring Journey

By Daniel "Ziggy" Laverde

As the rhythmic backbone of some of rock music's biggest acts, Brent Fitz has established himself as one of the most talented and versatile drummers in the industry. From his thunderous beats to his intricate piano playing, Fitz has captivated audiences around the world with his powerful and dynamic style. In this interview, Brent delves into his journey as a drummer, his influences, and the secrets behind his sound.

Through hard work and determination, Brent began to gain recognition as a talented drummer and multi-instrumentalist, and he eventually landed gigs with some of the biggest names in rock music. Over the years, he has toured the world, played on countless records, and shared the stage with music legends such as Slash, Alice Cooper, The Guess Who, and Gene Simmons. Fitz's success is a testament to his unwavering commitment to his craft and his willingness to put in the time and effort needed to achieve his goals. Brent's journey serves as an inspiration to aspiring musicians everywhere, showing that with hard work, dedication, and a little bit of luck, it is possible to make your dreams a reality.

MD: What inspired you to play the drums?
BF: At five years old, my parents got me involved [in music], going to group piano lessons and just being excited about music. There were always lots of instruments around the house. My parents were not professional musicians, but there was a piano and an organ in our house, that that was commonplace back then. I grew up in the 70s and it seemed like every household had an instrument with a keyboard in it. I always like to say piano got me started and it still is the most important instrument for me. I'm really thankful that it was the instrument that my parents chose to get me started with.

I grew up in the small, cold town of Winnipeg, Canada. Our house was always the invitational get-together place in the neighborhood, so everyone would come over to my house and play music in the basement. Early on, we would "air-band" to our favorite KISS albums with tennis rackets. Eventually, I created my first toy

drum kit by adding extra toms made from pails, so it looked like Peter Criss' drum kit. My parents noticed how serious I was about drums and decided to reach out to a reputable drum teacher in town to ask if I had any rhythmic potential. I'll never forget it. They brought me over to meet Garris Smith, and his son Vaughn. The first time meeting Garris, he had me sit down and play a beat, just play anything. I can't remember what I played, but I got a thumbs up from Garris, and my parents bought me a used drum kit right on the spot. It was a Yamaha silver sparkle kit. My parents paid for it, and we brought home this awesome drum kit that same day. I was 10 years old and I started lessons the next week. I continued for five years learning from two teachers, father and son. My parents felt it was important that I got both piano and drum lessons going at the same time, that's been a parallel my whole life as a piano playing drummer.

Later on, as I became influenced by all of the drummers I read about in *Modern Drummer* magazine, I would see Phil Collins, Don Henley and a lot of other drummers who were also singers and multi-instrumentalists. I started to relate to drummers like Tommy Lee, who also played piano, and I just sort of said, "Those drummers are speaking to me." I've really found a home more recently, flexing the ability to play guitar, bass, keyboards, sing, AND drum on big gigs. The ability to be a multi-instrumentalist in the music business has been the best thing for me, even though I've always gravitated towards drums. Drums were the first thing though that really got me established in the business.

MD: Does having an extensive knowledge of music beyond the drums help when you're writing with people like Slash?

BF: It's the most important thing. I understand ALL the instruments. When it comes to writing songs with Slash and an entire band, I always treat my drum parts, and what I bring to the table, as serving the music and the song. I'm never thinking, "How does my drum part stand out over everybody else?" It's about always serving the song. The key is to be thinking like a musician at all times and not stepping on the other instruments.

MD: How do you prepare to go into a recording session with Slash? Do you and Slash come up with ideas beforehand that you work out? I know that you and bassist Todd Kerns are always playing together. You guys have been playing for a long time, so you have chemistry there.

BF: After many, many years of playing with so many different personalities and so many great talents, I really do enjoy playing with people that I truly like on stage and off stage. It's really a pleasure to have so much history with someone like Todd who's so talented as a singer and multi-instrumentalist as well, as a rhythm section, we're a powerful team. We feel because we are both multi-instrumentalists, we're a pretty great foundation for Slash when he comes at us with ideas, and there's a lot of ideas. Slash is very prolific with tons of guitar riffs, he has so much in his head that all come out as ideas for songs, we have to be quick on our musical toes to support that. We always look forward to getting in the studio together. And always look forward to getting on stage. It's never like, "Oh, this guy, I can't stand him." No way!! I'm too old. I wanna play with guys that I really enjoy playing with. I'm just lucky after all these years to have that situation.

Todd and I discovered each other on the road in the late 80s. We were in a different bands, but I always remembered, "Hey, that guy is one of the most talented guys that I've ever seen front of a band. It would be great play in a band with him one day." But it often takes 20 years for things to happen. Around that same time, I saw Slash and Guns N' Roses on their very first tour opening for The Cult in 1987. They were a brand-new band, and I was a 17-year-old kid. I thought, "Who are these guys?" So I had the experience of going to see Slash on his first tour. Years later, it's really cool to put all that together with Todd and Slash into a working, touring, band today.

I've really found a home more recently, flexing the ability to play guitar, bass, keyboards, sing, AND drum on big gigs.

I'm never thinking, "How does my drum part stand out over everybody else?" It's about always serving the song.

We're all very independent as far as our careers, and Slash is very much, as we know, still a member of Guns N' Roses, and I am involved in many other different bands. I'm kind of a chameleon. I often put myself in a dangerous spot where there's five different gigs going on at once. I'm just wired that way. I love it.

MD:. How do you, Slash and the rest of the band prepare for the recording sessions? Do you write anything beforehand, or is it more organic?

BF: After recording three studio records together and touring for well over a decade, we thought we were preparing ourselves as usual, and in fairness, our new producer, Dave Cobb, didn't want to over think the pre-production ahead of time for this record. To be honest, Slash is not one to experiment on the spot when the recording light is on in the studio. That puts a lot of pressure on people in the moment. I remember reading articles about Neil Peart from Rush, and it was always said he would rehearse to rehearse. In other words, he'd spend his own time for weeks and weeks preparing himself before he even got together with the band to work on records and tour. I've always thought, "Well, that's a good way to be, always be overly prepared." Then you're not scared and looking for ideas. That way you've figured out the right musical parts that are going to live on forever on a song, when you actually do press record.

After making several records with Slash with different producers and in different studios, I can tell you that on *Apocalyptic Love*, we had a lot more of everything all figured out, we knew exactly what we were putting on tape. We spent months

saying, "Is that the right drum fill?" Producer Eric Valentine and I would have drum day, we would go to the studio and make sure ALL my parts were right with the music. I really appreciated that Eric Valentine spent that time with me and really pushed me to get to that level.

MD: How do you approach your drum sound? Do you go in the studio with the engineers, or do you have an idea of what you want for the sound of the drums you pick?

Ilya Mirman

BF: The drums are gonna sound different with every drummer's own personality. So, a lot of times on records, I don't always use the drum kit that I took on tour. A lot of the time, a producer will have a set that they've worked with on many other records and go, "Hey man, this kit sounds great. What do you think about using it?" So, I've definitely been open to using drums in studios that producers prefer. That being said, sometimes the variable of not being as comfortable as playing your own drums can be dangerous, but I've never looked at it as a disadvantage. After many gigs and many playing situations, I've worked out all the things in my playing style so that when I make records, I've got it figured out. How hard I play the snare, where I sit it in my own style of playing, overall volume— I've got all of that figured out. Dynamics are everything, and in our band with Slash we are very particular about dynamics. I know you have to hit the kick drum a certain way when you're in the studio. When the dynamics come in, you have to know how to work the physical side of that. I've done some records, especially with Eric Valentine on that first Slash record, where we used minimal miking. I learned about playing the kick drum at extreme volume and playing the cymbals quietly, and how to have those dynamics within your body while you're playing.

MD: What do you find to be the biggest challenge coming into this new album or on this last tour with Slash compared to the previous years together?

BF: When we started to rehearse and get ready for this tour, some new ideas were introduced while we were working up the set list. We had recorded a version of Elton John's "Rocket Man" years ago for a movie called *Stuntman*. The movie finally came out right before the tour, and we all thought, "Oh, that's right, we recorded that!" It was something we had just done for the movie, there wasn't any thought of it past that. But Slash always has great ideas, he said, "You know what, maybe we could do that song on this tour." Slash looks at me and says, "Well, you played piano on it, and you play everything, so just play piano AND drums during the song." I replied, "Great, yes, I guess I can do that, but how do we make that work ?" So, I got challenged to add a keyboard rig to my drum kit on this last tour.

It's actually not the first time I've played keys live with a drum kit. When I played with Vince Neil from Mötley Crüe back in 2001, I was doing my best Tommy Lee and I had a piano set up beside me onstage for the song "Home Sweet Home", which starts and ends on piano. So, this wasn't a first for me. The challenge on this tour was switching to just play piano in the verses of "Rocket Man," which are very subtle. Then playing drums in the choruses without missing a beat. That was my biggest challenge, to be playing piano and drums basically at the same time. And it worked out great, I was very proud to pull it off.

MD: It's amazing that you have that skill. You're already using all your limbs, and your mind's running a million miles an hour; Then switching instruments, but you pull it off. Who influenced you in that regard?

BF: Neil Peart certainly had all those extra things around his drum kit. I was always fascinated and impressed when Neil had a new drum kit. He'd have glockenspiels, xylophones, all those little percussion things, plus a whole electronic kit eventually behind him. I was very fascinated, he was a 'Swiss Army' drummer back in those days and had the complete circular drum kit. I really related to Geddy Lee in Rush too, playing keyboards, bass and singing all at the same time. Now in a way, I've figured out that I relate to both Neil Peart and Geddy Lee!

Rush has always been one of my go-to's for constant musical influence. I would come home every day after school in my teens and play side one of *Moving Pictures*. That was sort of my everyday "I'm gonna challenge myself and get better at that." I grew up as a huge Neil Peart fan. I've always loved Jeff Porcaro too. I'd probably say Jeff Porcaro's my favorite all-time overall drummer just for just his studio prowess and his musicianship of playing the right parts on great songs.

I also loved Buddy Rich. He's probably my favorite "drummer's drummer." Tommy Lee was very important in the 80's to so many drummers on a visual level, AND he played a lot of great parts on those Mötley records. Those were definitely the pieces of my puzzle: Neil Peart, Tommy Lee, Jeff Porcaro, and Buddy Rich all mixed into one drummer soup. That is the pool of influences.

MD: I hope people read this and they're inspired to play. Younger people will see you and think, "Yeah, I wanna do that. He plays with Slash, it's so cool."

BF: The best thing I ever did was get out of my safe zone and get around a bunch of other great musicians. It really did change my life.

MD: That's really brought you far in your career. I know Eric Singer was playing with Alice Cooper, and you also played with Alice Cooper. Was that a result of him going with KISS?

BF: I was on tour with a great Canadian band called Theory of a Deadman in the mid 2000s. Eric had asked if I was available to do some fill-ins because he was in between Alice and doing KISS gigs. I was able to do that. As both friends and drummers in the business, my role was to fill in for Eric on the Alice gig, not be in the band permanently. Whatever transpired afterwards, that's another conversation.

My job was just to come in and be the best fill-in and make everyone comfortable in the band. That's another art form too because you know what happens with these gigs? Most of the time you don't even get to rehearse. The expectation level after a million gigs is that they're gonna call you because they rely on you to be professional and to be able to chameleon yourself appropriately and professionally into a job situation. During a gig like Alice's, there's a lot of medleys of songs that are put together in the show. So, you must understand the medley form of a song. You have to be really conscious of tempos and the flow of the show. Then you've got the artistic and visual aspect of what's going on with Alice Cooper. He's getting his head cut off here and this and that. Then at the end of the show, you've gotta catch his top hat and don't drop it. You know, not only do you have to be a great drummer, but now you gotta visually put yourself into the band too. I also played on Eric's drums instead of my own. That could crush a lot of people, but I've just found that I throw myself into a million different scenarios and I welcome it. It just makes me a more well-rounded musician.

MD: I don't think many people can do what you're telling me, but your brain must work in a certain way. You just have a gift.

Ilya Mirman

Slash looks at me and says, "Well, you played piano on it, and you play everything, so just play piano AND drums during the song."

BF: Going back to the early days of playing with all my friends in my parents' basement and playing with different people, I never wanted to play music by myself. I always wanted to experience it with other people. I'm very social, I'm people oriented, I love being around other musicians, and I love playing in front of people. That's what I'm wired for, so getting to do five different gigs sometimes is part of the 'sickness' and it's part of what fuels me. Getting different set lists all the time and the challenge of, "I'm not on piano on this one. I'm on drums." I'm a regular fill-in for one of my heroes in The Guess Who. Garry Peterson, the original drummer is from my hometown. But I've also been the bass player AND the keyboard player in the band. I've actually played three different instruments live, that's a rare thing, and a real anomaly.

Unfortunately, we had a similar episode on tour with Slash back in 2010. We were on tour in Russia, and when we got to Moscow, Todd Kerns had a detached retina which had to be dealt with immediately. We had to fly Todd home to the U.S. the morning of the show for emergency surgery. That meant, "What are we gonna do to not cancel this Moscow show?" Luckily, we had a great drum-tech named John Douglas on tour with us, who also happens to be a great drummer. "JD" has teched for Frank Beard and ZZ Top, Alex Van Halen, Joey Kramer from Aerosmith, Tico Torres from Bon Jovi, the list goes on and on and on. He's one of THE most talented artists, drummer, and drum-techs around. He's done a million custom painted drum kits and logo drumheads for famous drummers, including a kit for me. He just happened to be drum teching for me on that first Slash tour.

I remember Slash calling me that morning and saying, "Todd's going home, we should figure out what we're gonna do." I said, "By sound check, I'll have it all figured out," Slash said, "Well, I don't know what the plan is Brent," and I said, "JD's gonna play drums." He said, "Well, I know JD's a great drummer, but that doesn't answer the question. What are you gonna play?" I said, "I'm playing bass," and he said, "I didn't know even that you played bass Brent." I said, "You're gonna find out during sound check." So, I took over on bass and we did the shows. We sold out Moscow, the next night we went to St. Petersburg, and we kept the tour going. I just switched instruments and directed JD onstage. However, JD was not too crazy about filling in last minute.

The flow was completely changed because we lost Todd for the shows. But, we actually had great shows because we made it work at the last minute with me on bass and JD on drums.

Ilya Mirman

John Douglas is in Aerosmith now. He's been playing drums with them for quite awhile. These things happen. A lot of times the drum tech is just as good as the drummer of the gig.

MD: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about before we wrap things up?

BF: You can be the best drummer, stay in your basement, and nobody will hear you. You might have more chops than me and everybody else, but you gotta have the wherewithal to get out and play in front of people and be willing to make mistakes and learn from them. That's what I did. I'm all bumps and bruises. I'm an open book. I love talking to drummers and inspiring people. I go out of my way to meet and be friendly with other drummers. I like to talk, learn, and be a sponge to learn as much as you can from other musicians.

It's great being a musician, what a privilege. It's also great to do interviews, talk to people, and share stories. If someone else gets a great lesson out of it, and then shares that lesson, then we all experience it together, that's why I love my drummer friends. It's so important to be friends with guys like Eric Singer and all the other great drummers. We always inspire each other.

I really related to Geddy Lee in Rush too, playing keyboards, bass and singing all at the same time. Now in a way, I've figured out that I relate to both Neil Peart and Geddy Lee!

Check out Brent's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

Sick New World Fest in Las Vegas
A Rhythmic Extravaganza

By Daniel "Ziggy" Laverde

Las Vegas recently witnessed a musical explosion like never before as the *Sick New World Fest* took over the city. This high-octane festival became the talk of the town, bringing together drummers and music lovers from all corners of the globe for an unforgettable weekend of rock and metal. The festival grounds were ablaze with electrifying performances, as drummers unleashed their rhythmic prowess and pushed the boundaries of what's possible behind the kit. From thunderous double bass pedal work to intricate fills that defied gravity, the drumming talent on display was mind-blowing. Iconic bands such as Incubus graced the stage, with Jose Pasillas showcasing his legendary skills and leaving the crowd in awe. His precision and groove reminded everyone why he's considered a drumming icon. Meanwhile, Will Hunt of Evanescence proved why he's a force to be reckoned with, delivering explosive beats that resonated deep within the audience's souls.

Beyond the thrilling performances, the festival atmosphere was electric, with fans passionately headbanging and moshing to their favorite bands. The sense of camaraderie and shared love for music was palpable, as attendees celebrated the power of rhythm and its ability to bring people together. As the dust settled and the echoes of the festival faded, *Modern Drummer Magazine* talked with some of the incredible drumming talent that graced the *Sick New World Fest* stages. Enjoy as we dive into exclusive interviews with these exceptional drummers sharing their insights, experiences, and inspirations behind their remarkable performances.

Incubus drummer Jose Pasillas

Prepare to be captivated by the rhythmic wizardry of Jose Pasillas, the visionary drummer of the renowned band Incubus. With his nuanced grooves and impeccable sense of timing, Pasillas has been the heartbeat behind Incubus' infectious sound for decades. Join us as we delve into his musical journey, exploring the creative process and influences that have shaped his signature style. From the festival stages to the studio, Pasillas' drumming prowess has continuously enthralled audiences, making him a true legend in the world of modern rock.

MD: What turned you on to drumming?

JP: I think drums always stood out to me when I started listening to music. I started finding my own music in junior high. I was getting into bands like the Ramones and Led Zeppelin. I used to skateboard all the time, and all the videos that were coming out influenced what I listened to. It was all over the place, from Louis Armstrong to Bad Religion to Primus. I fell in love with all the early 90's alternative rock stuff, and I would always air-drum. While all this was happening, Steven Adler, the original drummer for Guns 'n' Roses, moved next door to me and I would hear him play in the middle of the night. That just sparked my interest even more. I went over one day and asked if I could sit behind his drum kit. I would be in awe of his huge white oyster double kick DW drum kit. Around 15 is when I really started playing drums.

MD: How did your sound evolve through changes in the band?

JP: The bands I listened to really shaped my playing. In particular, Tim Alexander from Primus, Stewart Copeland, Neil Peart, and George Hurley of fIREHOSE. I tried to emulate them all the time. Our records and songs are really different from one to the next, so it gave me a chance to explore the space. I always liked those bands because they always had chops and put them in there very subtly, not only in transitional roles, but even in the verses every eight bars. Something to give us some color, but not overpowering. That was always the most impactful thing.

MD: How has the writing process worked with the band? Does someone come up with an idea or is it more collaborative?

JP: It's both. It's definitely a group effort. Usually, we try to get a good foundation before everyone throws stuff on it. For example, Mike will come in with a couple of guitar riffs, and Brandon will come in and see if he can gel with it. Then we put it together while everyone's chiming in. For us, it works really well. I think the fact that we're all individuals helps add that color to the band. I think that's what makes our music work the way it does. We don't really fit in any one genre, but we've made it seamless. We've cleaned it up overtime.

MD: What goes into getting a great live sound on the drums?

JP: What the audience is hearing comes from having a really good front-of-house engineer. We've had our front-of-house guy for over 25 years and he's one of the best. It's a very clean sound, you've got the whole spectrum in there. Everyone's has their own sound, and our sound guy puts it together really nicely. We all put effort into our own sounds, but we're lucky to have a great sound guy.

MD: Do you often find yourself changing the drum parts live as opposed to playing them like the record?

JP: I do. If the music's evolving, I change it.

MD: What do you do before the shows to warm up?

JP: I don't do anything really. I used to practice on a pad, but I'm not a chops sort of guy. I didn't formally learn how to play drums with paradiddles and any foundation like that. I realized that I could warm up for hours before a show and still have a really crappy show, because it's more of my mental state. If I feel good, I'll play good. I try to go in with a good outlook and harness any nervous energy and hope it comes out live. If I can't get it out and feel bad on stage, it's the longest set in the world. It's impossible to have a great show every night, but when I have a bad show, no one knows. It's more of an internal feeling for me.

MD: What advice would you give to any touring drummer who might be overthinking things?

JP: Try to get out of your head. I've been playing the same songs for 20 years, so it's second nature at this point. Trust yourself, follow your gut, and just keep playing.

Will Hunt of Evanescence

Modern Drummer had the privilege of sitting down with the one and only Will Hunt, the powerhouse drummer of the iconic band Evanescence. With his precise yet explosive playing style, Will has left a memorable mark on the world of rock and metal music. From his dynamic grooves to his thundering double bass pedal work, his rhythmic prowess has captivated fans worldwide, driving them to headbang in unison. As we delved into his musical journey and his role within Evanescence, Will shared his insights, experiences, and inspirations as a drummer.

MD: What influenced you as a drummer growing up?

WH: I was always around music. My dad plays guitar and my mom plays piano. There was always music in whatever house I was in. When I was five, I saw KISS on TV, and something about that made me say "I wanna do that." I liked the theatrics, but I also liked the heaviness It was this really heavy, ominous-sounding music. There was a lot of energy in the performances. As I got going, I got into other bands like AC/DC and The Police, and drummers like Stewart Copeland and Terry Bozzio. I discovered Tommy Lee when I was 12, and he was the first guy who was playing that way visually on a mass scale. Again, the ferocity, the groove, and the showmanship really grabbed me. Then I went backwards. Tommy Lee was heavily influenced by Zeppelin, and I of course knew Zeppelin, but I didn't really do the deep dive into John Bonham until I got into Tommy Lee.

MD: Do you find yourself playing like some of your heroes?

WH: One hundred percent. Music in general is just people copying other people and somehow making it their own. I'm a visual guy, and I love playing that way. I'm an entertainer. This music lends itself to those kinds of theatrics.

MD: How did you get together with Evanescence?

WH: I had done work with a producer named David Bendeth, and I was in couple different bands signed to RCA and Warner Records. I was in Vegas playing with Vince Neil and I got a call from David who said Evanescence's manager is looking for a drummer. I said, "Absolutely." When I got the gig, they were in the middle of the tour for the second record and said they just needed a touring drummer. Amy Lee (co-founder and singer of Evanescence said she was gonna do it for seven more months and may never do it again, so I knew there was a potential end-date for the gig. I came in and decided I was gonna do my best, and hopefully by some strange stretch of the imagination maybe show her that this could go on.

MD: What about you as a drummer do you think attracted Amy Lee?

WH: I think initially she didn't know much about me other than another band I was in called Dark New Day. The guitar player, Troy, came with me from that band to Evanescence. She had seen us on tour, and she really liked our band. We were a little more out of the mold from your typical nu-metal band. We had different attitudes, we came from difference places, and I'm a totally different drummer from the last guy in Evanescence, both in feel and groove.

MD: What was the writing and recording process for *The Bitter Truth*?

WH: We started writing for that record about a year and a half before it came out. We did things at home, exchanged some ideas, and then we had a couple of different writing sessions over multiple days. We had a really beautiful session which was a week in the mountains of Quebec, about ten miles from where Rush recorded *Moving Pictures*. A lot of music came from that session. Then we went in with our producer, Nick Raskulinecz. Working with him was an incredible experience. He knows how to coach us as we go. That part took another month or so. We did some writing right before the pandemic and then figured out a way to get together in a bubble and do some more.

Nick and I are both drum sound nerds. We had done this really deep dive into Def Leppard's *Pyromania*. That's got nothing to do with how we sound, but it was a very futuristic drum sound for the time it came out. There's been all this speculation about, "How did they get this snare sound?" We found out that they put the drums through a sampler. The cymbals were real, but the drums were programmed. We said, "Let's take this another step." The problem with room mics is that they capture all the high end of the cymbals, so there's only so much you can add with those. What we wanted to do was track the drums, and instead of layering the samples on top of what's there, we took the samples and played those through a big PA in the same room and no cymbals. It was just kick, snare, and toms coming through this massive PA. We were able to take the room mics

and compress them to really squash them. We were able to control the volume of the drums and play them back through the PA. Those became the samples we used, and we just played the room mics. I think it's a unique sound.

MD: What drums did you use on the record?

WH: For the first four songs we recorded pre-pandemic, I used my old Pearl Reference kit, which I'm actually playing today. When we're set up, I have a full electronic kit within my acoustic kit, so you'll see triggers on my left and right. For the rest of the record, I used my Pearl Reference Pure kit with the same sample rig.

We used a lot of different snares. One of the snares we used on several songs is the one I'm using today. It's a Pearl Reference wood snare that we pulled the original lug casings off because I was snapping them in half. We put tube lugs on it which changed the sound. There's a song called "Fear of the Dark" that we used an older 2010 Pearl UltraCast aluminum snare on. It's so unique sounding. We used an old Tama Bell Brass and Keplinger snare on some songs. When Nick's in the room and he's listening back to it, he can hear if we need something that cuts a little more or needs to be fatter. I think we went through six different snares.

MD: How do you prepare for a show? What's your routine?

WH: I stretch a lot since I'm a full-body player. I play rudiments like six-stroke rolls to get the hands loosened-up. Then a lot of finger technique. I use the Vater Virgil Donati Signature sticks with no lacquer and Groove Juice's "Stick Grip." You spray this stuff on the stick grip area, and it add this stickiness to the stick that doesn't come off in your hand.

MD: Does it take you a few songs to get into the groove of things or is it in fifth gear right out of the gate?

WH: I come out swinging. You don't play a football game and wait until the third quarter to get in the zone.

MD: What do you hope you give to the crowd?

WH: I like it when people go, "Oh! Look at that! Listen to that!" I guess the biggest compliment and achievement in a performance to me is to see people move. When you've got 50,000 people and they're all shaking their heads at the same time, that's a powerful feeling.

MD: What advice would you give a young drummer who looks up to you?

WH: I would say have a backup plan because the music industry has not gotten any easier, but if you know that's what you wanna do and it's your passion, then be the best you that you can be. It's really easy to look at drummers in this day of YouTube and be amazed by them, but at the same time I go, "Well, that's not my lane. I wanna write great songs and great drum parts that people will move to." Just because you're the most technically proficient player in the world doesn't mean that you're gonna be able to do that. Full respect for people who do that, but at the same time, I know my lane.

Thomas Pridgen of Fever 333

From Thomas Pridgen's early days with The Mars Volta to his current collaboration with Fever 333, Pridgen's lightning-fast hands and feet have created a spellbinding fusion of technical precision and raw power. Join us as we delve into his musical journey, exploring the exhilarating experiences and the creative process behind his explosive performances. Brace yourself for the exploration of the mind and artistry of Thomas Pridgen, the rhythmic force driving Fever 333.

MD: What influenced you to play the drums?

TP: I've been playing drums since I was three. I grew up in church. My grandma was a piano player, but she had kids and couldn't play as much as she wanted. She saw that I enjoyed playing music, and she nurtured it. After a minute of just paying my dues, I ended up having the church seat and I became the main drummer. Then, I went to school for music and took lessons from a bunch of legends like Dennis Chambers. I knew I wanted to play drums, but I didn't know I wanted to do it as a living until I saw Narada Michael Walden.

MD: At age nine you won the Guitar Center Drum-Off. How did you get into that?

TP: All the church drummers used to play Pearl, and they would have these sales on Pearl Export drums. The five-piece would be like $600 since it was a lower-line kit. One day in *Modern Drummer*, I saw the Pearl Masters series kit and I wanted it. It was too much for my grandma to afford at the time, but the next thing you know they had it as the prize for the Drum-Off. I was like, "I'm gonna win it! Trust me."

MD: How did you get your endorsement with Zildjian at just 10 years old?

TP: Dennis Chambers came to town around the same time as the Drum-Off that. He knew who I was by then. He let me sit in every night on his gig, and he played a whole week. At the end of it, he sent me some cymbals and some sticks. Zildjian already knew me, and they knew he sent me some of their cymbals. The next week, a drum store had a big event with people from Pearl. They knew who I was, so they hooked me up with Zildjian. It was

Alex Kluft

surreal.
MD: What was your school life like leading up to your Berklee scholarship?
TP: I played with a lot of people in middle and high school. I had a jazz band and played with a bunch of people producing and making beats. I got a full ride to Berklee when I was 15 and went there at 17. I was always playing music. My mom wanted me to do anything that wasn't drums, while my grandmother wanted me to play drums. It was kind of the best of both worlds with me learning about things that weren't just drums. I was skating at the time too, and that introduced me to rock 'n' roll. NOFX and Green Day lived in my city, and I was introduced to a lot of different hip-hop music from skating.
MD: How did you click with Fever 333?
TP: It's a lot of hip-hop inspired stuff with rock, those are both things I love to play. We just started playing together so it's super fresh. Our first time playing was great. We played a house party in Jason's neighborhood. People liked it. We have a pocket that makes people move, so I'm surprised if people don't move. A lot of people are saying our sound has a funkier edge to it.
MD: Do you ever feel like your incorporating elements of different groups, or do you find yourself having to make that disconnect whenever you play with new people?
TP: I grew up taking lessons from a bunch of Afro-Cuban drummers. A lot of people try to make these different genres but it all just sounds like music to me. I think I take it all with me. From a one-drop to hip-hop it would just be one beat off. The approach to gospel and rock is a lot of the same because of the energy. Sometimes creating energy is bigger than what you're actually playing. The crowds always keep me excited.

Zyon Cavalera of Soulfly

In the realm of heavy metal music, there are drummers who rise above the rest, commanding attention with their blistering beats and rhythmic prowess. We had the privilege of delving into the world of one such extraordinary musician. Ladies and gentlemen, prepare to be immersed in the thunderous realm of Zyon Cavalera, the powerhouse drummer of the iconic band Soulfly. From his bone-shaking double bass pedal assaults to his intricate and lightning-fast fills, Zyon's mastery of the drums is a force to be reckoned with.
MD: How did you feel playing the Sick New World Festival?
ZC: I was surprised to see so many bands in one day. Usually when you see that many bands on a flyer you think it's gonna be spread out for a few days, but they managed to put it all into one day. Our set was only 30 minutes, but it was honestly so fun. We brought it back to that early-2000's nu-metal vibe, and I thought the crowd responded really well. I was a little winded a few songs in because of all the energy hitting us at once.
MD: How do you approach a big show like this? What's your routine?
ZC: I make sure I'm really hydrated days in advance. If you don't do that, I feel like you lose energy quicker. Once it's showtime, eating healthy is very important. I felt good up there. I had good energy. It was a little hot, so it would've been nice to get that "sunset slot" where it's cooling down a little bit.
MD: How was your playing changed overtime with the band? What was it like when you first joined?
ZC: At first, I was just seeing if I could play the material at the highest level, and play it how it was written and performed. As a young kid, I always watched the original drummers of Soulfly, Joe Nunez and Roy Mayorga. That taught me a lot before I even became a drummer. Once I decided to be a drummer, it clicked easily. Now that I'm over ten years in, I've gotten to a point to where I can add my own spice and flavor to the songs, mixing the old drummer stuff with the new drummer stuff. I feel it's a good blend.
MD: When you're playing live and feeling energy from the crowd, do you ever improvise?
ZC: Yeah. I usually never play a set the same way twice. I feel like it's exciting if you do something new and other people in the band notice it. Pretty much every set I'll be trying something new, but it sometimes gets to the point where it's like, "Alright, you might be trying a little too much, try to tone it down."
MD: How does it feel having grown up watching your dad play in the band and you now being in the band?
ZC: I was always around music, but I wanted to be a "normal" kid and play sports, skateboard, and play video games. As I got older, I realized I had a unique life that I was brought into, and I should take advantage of it. I was able to soak all that up from a young age. It's one of those things where I had this encyclopedia of knowledge. It felt very "meant to be" once it got to this point.

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MD: Do you feel like you've earned your spot in the band? Were there suspicions of nepotism from the fans?
ZC: For sure. I would say I got thrown into the fire at a pretty young age. I definitely got criticism, and rightfully so. If a majority of the audience says something, maybe there's something to it. The only way I was gonna outgrow that was to put in the work and get better. I'm at a point now where I feel comfortable in my position to play with all these big bands like the ones we're playing with today.
MD: Can you think of a time where you felt the most "in the zone" while playing?
ZC: Recently we played Australia, and those shows were insane. The shows were with Gojira and Deftones. Those bands have drummers I really look up to, and I knew I had to bring my A game with those guys. This set was awesome too.
MD: What advice has stuck with you throughout your drumming

career?
ZC: When I was really little, even before I decided to be a drummer, our family was doing a tour with Black Sabbath. At the end we went to say bye to the band members, and Bill Ward and his wife were there. I was just tapping on my chest, and she pointed at me and goes "Bill used to do that too. You could be the next Bill Ward one day." That always stuck with me.
MD: Who are you biggest influences?
ZC: Definitely Abe Cunningham from Deftones, Roy Mayorga, and my uncle Igor, whose work still blows me away. Eloy's a sick drummer too.
MD: What advice could you give aspiring drummers?
ZC: We've all been in that moment where we see someone doing something great and we're thinking, "I don't know if I could ever do that." I totally felt that. I was at the bottom of the mountain looking up at the top. I think anybody can do it. Just keep climbing that mountain even if you're older and unsure. Don't stop. If you feel in your heart that you can be the best, you can do it. Don't let anyone else tell you any different.

Sean Radcliffe of Loathe

Step into the world of mesmerizing rhythms and sonic exploration as we take an inside look at the remarkable journey of drummer Sean Radcliffe with the boundary-pushing band Loathe. With his dynamic and inventive drumming style, Radcliffe has been an integral part of Loathe's rise to prominence in the progressive metal scene. From their mesmerizing compositions to their captivating live performances, Loathe has been pushing the boundaries and Radcliffe's rhythmic foundation has played a crucial role in their sonic evolution.
MD: How did Loathe form?
SR: The guitarist and I met when we were both playing the same show. He was playing a Haunted Shores song and we just hit it off from there. We eventually left those bands and made this band together. We've known each other quite a long time.
MD: What influenced you in how you approach your music?
SR: Drumming-wise it was Aaron Gillespie from Underoath when I was 15 to 18. Then it got a bit more technical with people like Cameron Losch from Born of Osiris and Tomas Haake from Meshuggah. As far as music and writing, I've been around music my whole life. I play guitar and bass too.
MD: What's the writing process like for the band?
SR: We don't really jam together. I'll just sit at home, write something on the computer, and send it to the band or vice versa. It's either a full song start to finish or just a section that we'll build together. There's been some songs where Eric wrote everything on his own and I've wrote everything on my own, but we don't do credits or anything like that.
MD: What's been one of the biggest challenges you've overcome with the band?
SR: I actually prefer the writing, production, and methodical aspects of the band versus the spur-of-the-moment feeling of the stage. That's not my favorite thing about the band, so the touring life is a hard thing for me.
MD: How do the band members get along?
SR: We've been at each other's throats a lot, but I think we're definitely growing up together. It's basically a four-way relationship. You have to navigate everyone's emotions and learn how to give and take criticism.
MD: What do you do to warm up before a show?
SR: I don't warm up on a pad. But I do this thing where I take a shoelace, I tie it in a loop, and I step in it so it's over my knees. I pull really tight and its super bouncy. I've gotten up to 300 bpm just with the shoelace. It's faster than any pad I've ever played.
MD: What equipment do you play?
SR: I play Zildjian cymbals, DW hardware, and Vic Firth sticks. I don't have a drum company right now, but at home I play a Gretsch kit.
MD: What are you looking forward to most with the band?
SR: We've been in the process of recording an album for a long time. It takes us a long time because we're very focused on the minutia of everything. We're very much perfectionists when it comes to writing. I think our last album was very eclectic, and I think this one will still be eclectic but hopefully a bit more focused. We're still gonna have a lot of soft and a lot of heavy.
MD: Do you feel the band's sound has evolved since its inception?
SR: Yeah, definitely. I think when we started incorporating my writing into it, the music gained another avenue. I hadn't had much influence on the writing before, but once I started incorporating everything I grew up listening to, it just added another element to the band. Our previous guitarist and current guitarist wrote a lot of the first album and EP we had. I don't really write super heavy stuff. I tend to write more chord-y, melodic stuff.
MD: What song are you most proud of?
SR: Probably "Screaming." It almost never repeats and it's constantly evolving. We originally scrapped it from the album, and then I went back it rewrote it for the upcoming album. Everyone liked it so much that we used it.
MD: What songs have been hitting the hardest live?
SR: Either "Gored" or "Heavy is the Head…" Those are some are my favorite to play live.

Feisal El-Kharagi

Step Up and Raise Your Standards!

By Chris Lesso

Getting to your next level of excellence comes in *evolutions*, not *revolutions*. We all share the battle of fighting self-sabotage from our "shadow selves." This lesser part of us survives by running to the light of ease and safety. Fighting this by stepping up and raising your standards takes constant effort.

The standards of those around us soon become ours without us even realizing. Create a "circle of genius" around you consisting of influencers that strive for perfection in the smallest of ways. Dom Famularo, known as "drumming's global ambassador," was my teacher and mentor, and he made a big impact on me. At one of his many drum masterclasses given around the world, one brief moment has stayed with me. At this masterclass Dom had some handouts for everyone. He offhandedly mentioned that he'd pass them out "later." But then he caught himself, and self-corrected himself in front of the gathered group of drummers. He stopped and said out loud, "No, I'm going to pass these out right now." Instead of putting it off, Dom shifted back to "owning now." These few seconds stuck with me, because it shows the constant push that Dom puts on himself to keep his standards high, and how those standards can slip unless we continually and consistently "step up."

The tiny actions that no one sees are where and when our true standards are revealed. These micro-moments come to define you, zooming from the big to the small and back again. The "now habit" empowers you to own those throwaway moments that most would see as worthless. Those moments come to embody who you are and who you will become. Our inner witness knows when we give more than expected. We choose our destiny through actions when no one is looking. It's the moments that we observe ourselves stepping into our power that fuel our confidence and peace of mind.

I enjoy seeing performances of the KODO drummers from Japan, they are one of my absolute favorites. The massive Taiko drumming is awe inspiring, but after each song, notice how they meticulously place their sticks down in the same precise way after every performance. The rhythms that shake the earth are extraordinary, but the way that they take just as much care to finish with a fine attention to detail is equally extrordianary. It's easy to focus on big actions (the drumming,) while brushing aside the quality of something so minuscule as putting down the drumsticks. They may not seem equal at first, but they're one and the same.

The KODO drummers are using the same meticulous simplicity of the Chadō Tea Ceremony, known as the Japanese Way of Tea. This ancient ritual is deeply rooted in Zen philosophy, it brings harmony and inner peace to all that are gathered. This ceremony can last as long as four hours. In it, motions that take years to learn are painstakingly performed, even down to the way the utensils are carefully purified, and the bowl is turned clockwise in the palm of the hand exactly two times.

Across the ocean at one of the world's finest restaurants, the team at New York's Eleven Madison Park are taking similar obsessive care to similar heights. To give them an edge, they use intention as a tool to transform their restaurant's experience. They go so far as to position the logos on the bottom of the plates to face exactly the same way, every time. No one else may ever notice this small act of striving for perfection, but they know their standards. Going to these lengths affects every other action that orbits their vision of their restaurant's experience.

Mediocrity comes from only focusing on the big things, but those at the top of their game go for granularity. Others may not notice it, but it's felt. Seek out the smallest of ways to raise your standards in drumming and in life. Take this attitude into all you do, both in the big and the small. The world is watching, and even when they're not, you know you've lived the harder choice, to walk *your* truth. Own your world by keeping your standards high, and to live your best self through drumming and beyond.

Are you ready to unleash your potential in drumming and life? Chris Lesso's LTR DRUMMING METHOD is for drummers who want to reach higher. If you're ready to live your best self through drumming, book your first free session at **chrislesso.net/LTRDRUMMING**

Check out Chris's *Modern Drummer* profile page at moderndrummer.com

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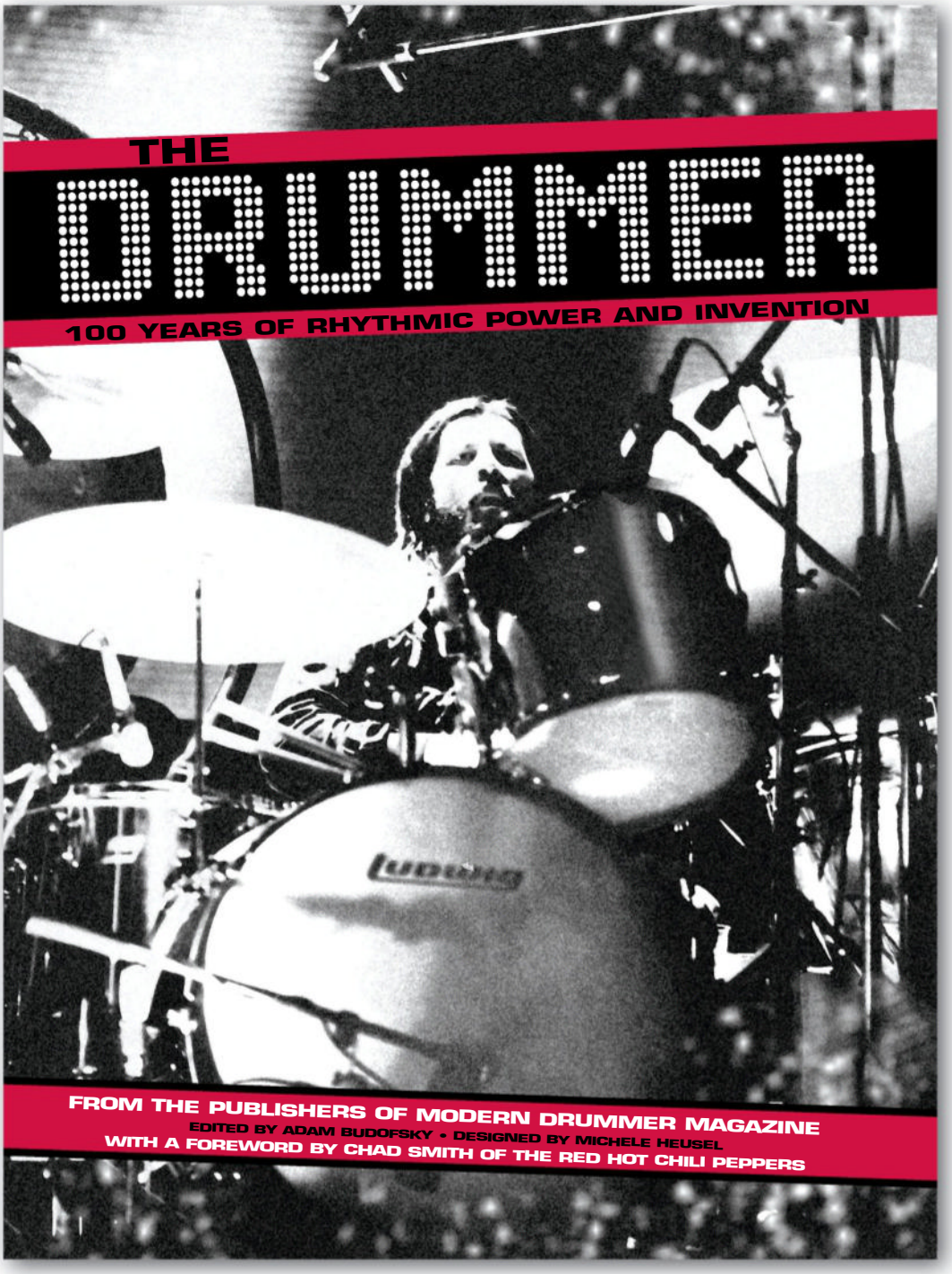

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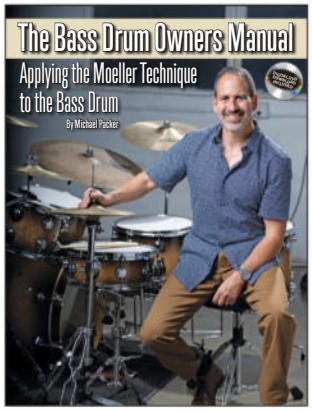
The Bass Drum Owners Manual:

Applying the Heel Up Technique to Grooves

By Michael Packer

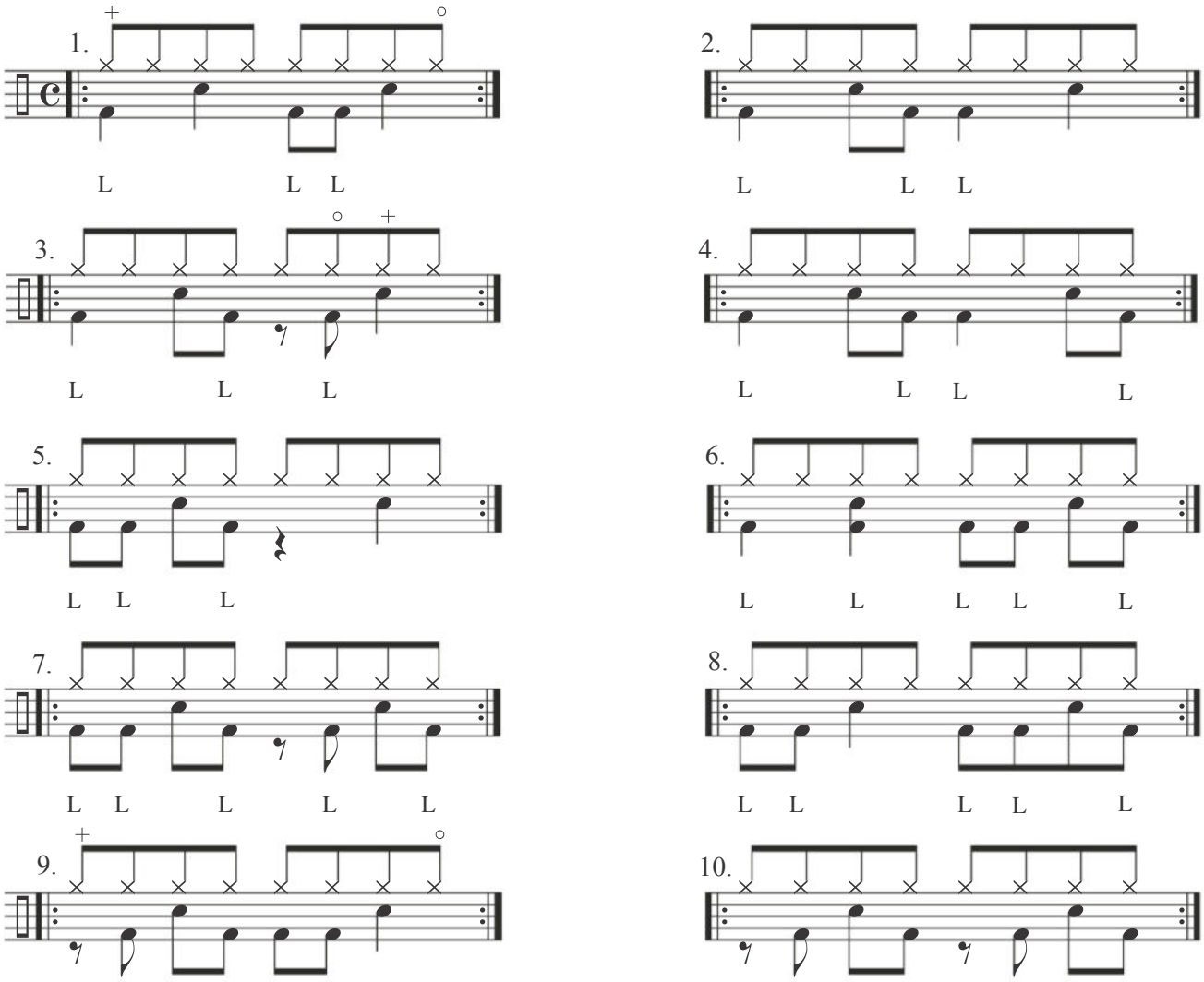
This month *Modern Drummer* will continue to include excerpts from Michael Packer's essential book on bass drum control and technique *The Bass Drum Owners Manual: Applying the Moeller Technique to the Bass Drum*. As you will see, this is a new way of thinking about bass drum (and foot) control that is based in an old, popular, and useful hand technique called The Moeller Technique. Michael addresses the essential components of bass drum and hi-hat control. Let Michael's wisdom and the wisdom of the Moeller Technique help you improve the control, sound, and eventually speed, of your feet, regardless of musical style.



The following exercises are designed to aid in the development of bass drum technique within grooves. Focus on the proper playing motions described in past columns and relaxation of the feet and legs. Once the exercises are comfortable add embellishments such as accents and ghost notes for a more musical application. The first several exercises will use leg strokes. The hi-hat will play open and closed sounds.

To play the open sounds you can play with the heel up for a nice, tight check sound. If the tempo is slow and leaving the heel up is uncomfortable drop the heel to the heel plate. This will give a more open or legato sound.

Begin playing these exercises at 90 BPM. When comfortable gradually increase the tempo. Exercises containing two or more 8th notes will be played as written. If the tempo is too fast for leg strokes apply the ankle down motions. The ankle and leg stroke techniques are discussed in previous columns in previous months of *Modern Drummer* and in the book *The Bass Drum Owners Manual.*



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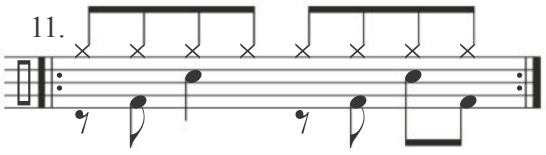

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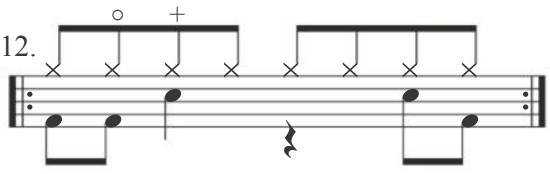

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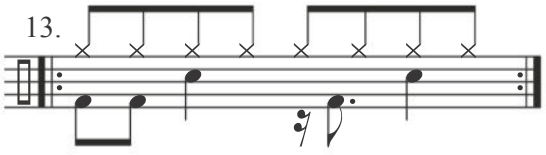

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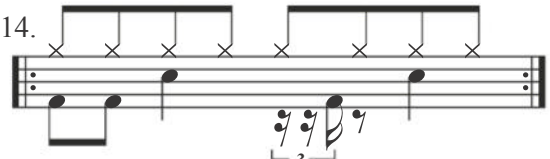
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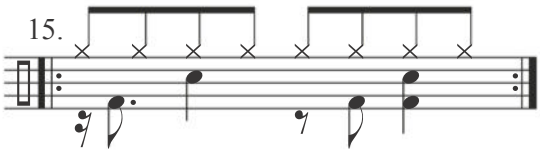

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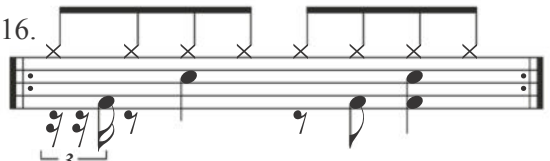

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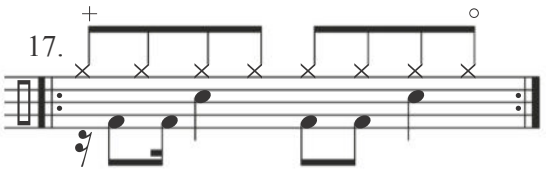

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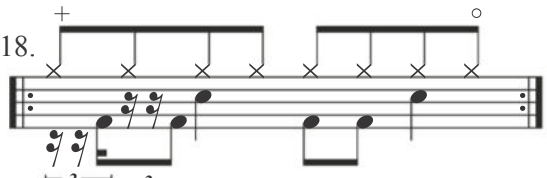

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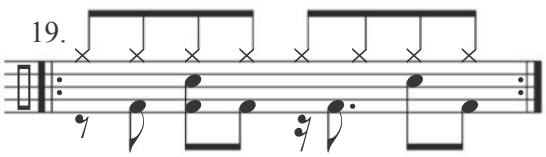

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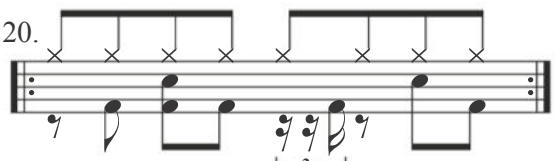

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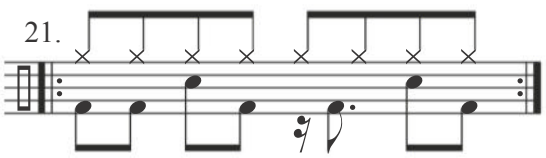

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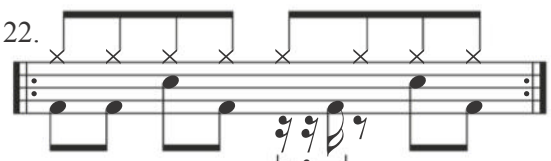
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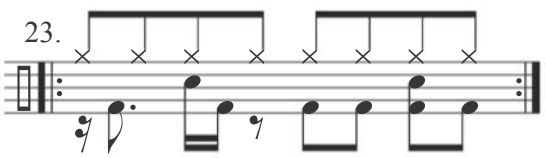

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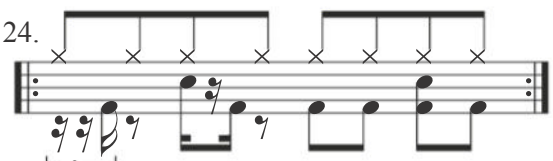

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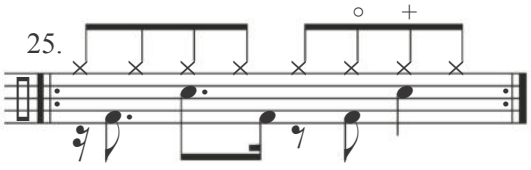

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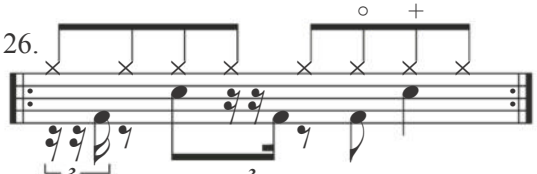

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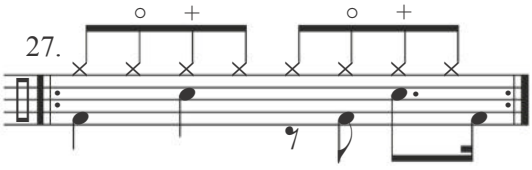

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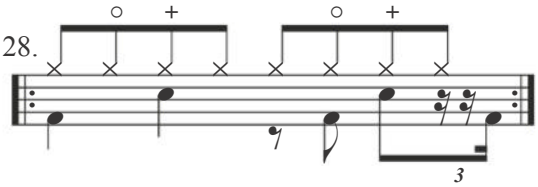

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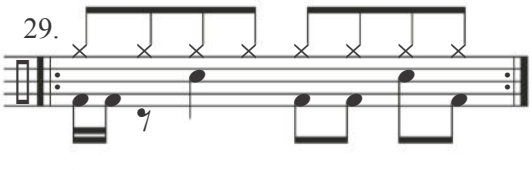

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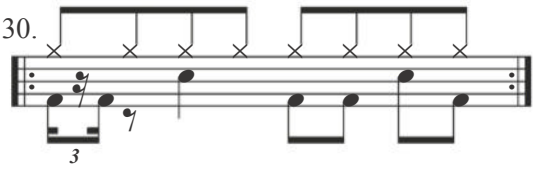

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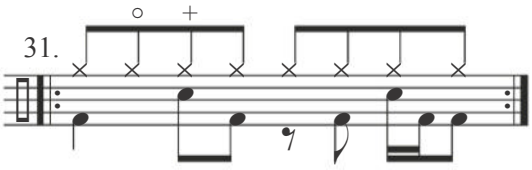

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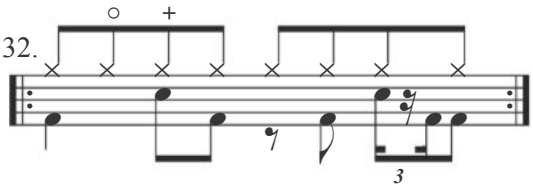

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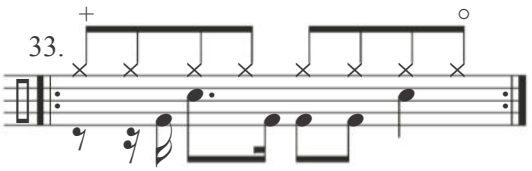

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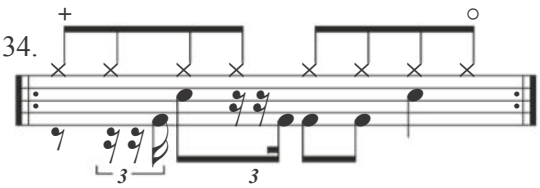

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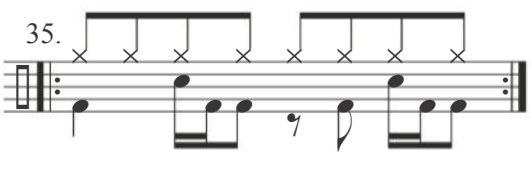

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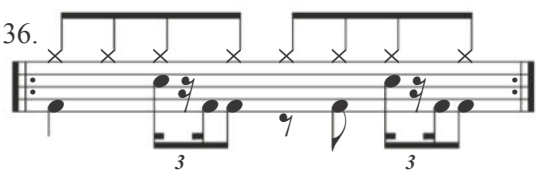

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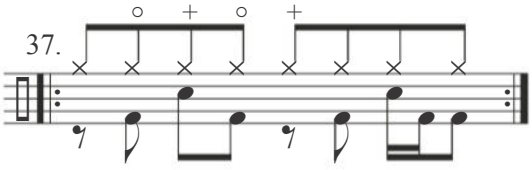

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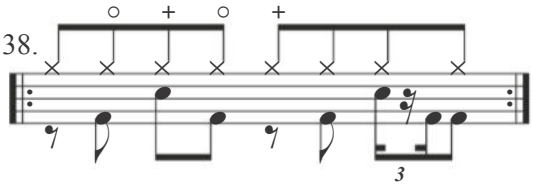

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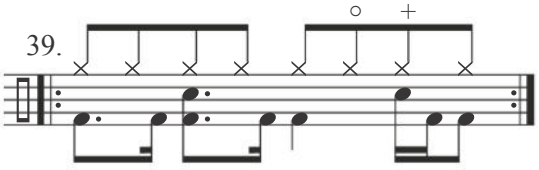

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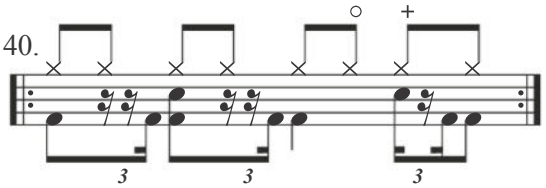

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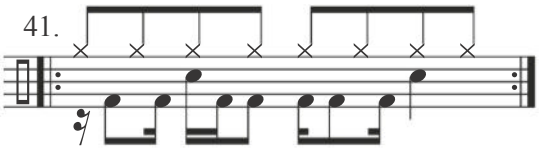

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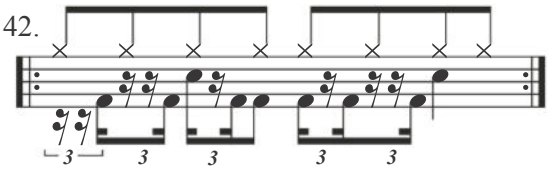

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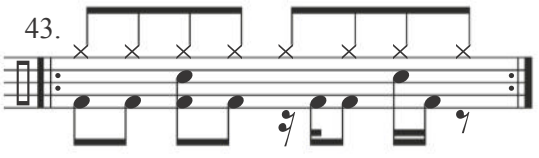

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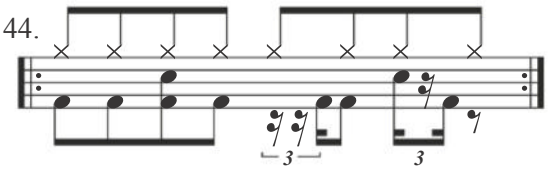

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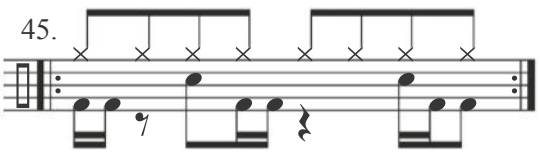

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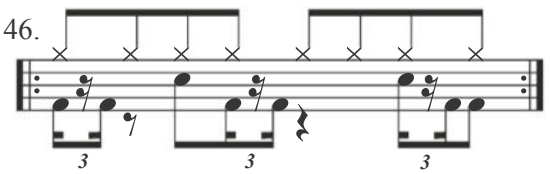

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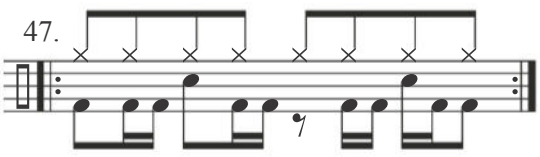

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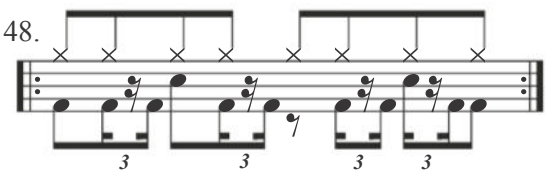

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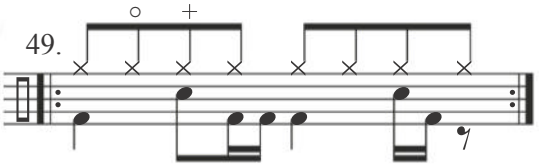

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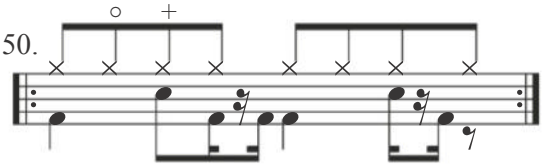

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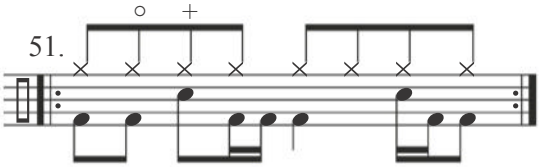

L L A A D A D

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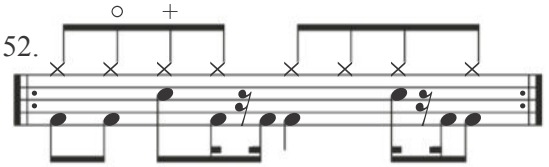

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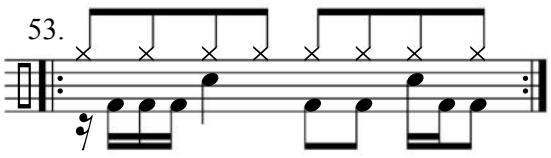

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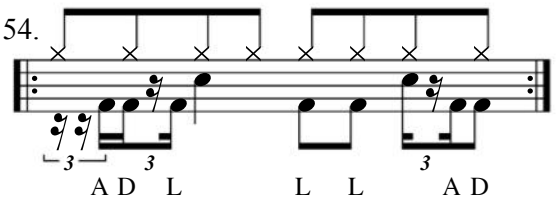

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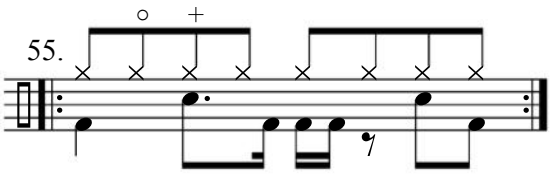

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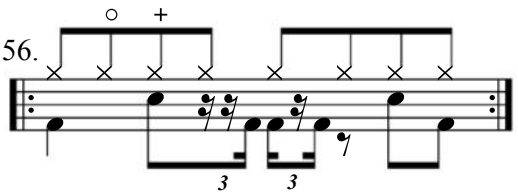

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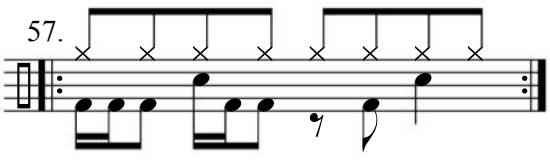

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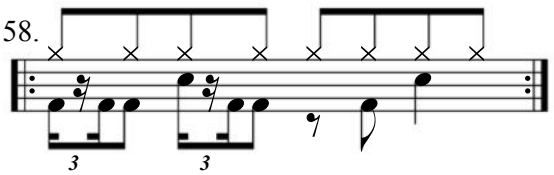

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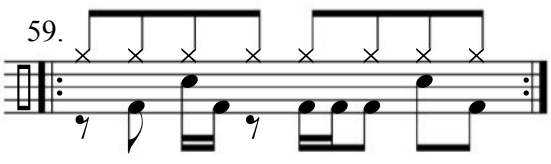

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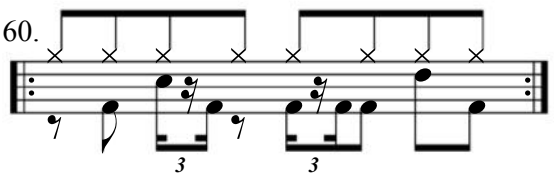

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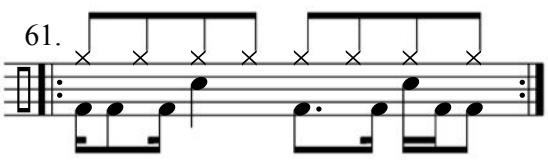

A D L L L A D

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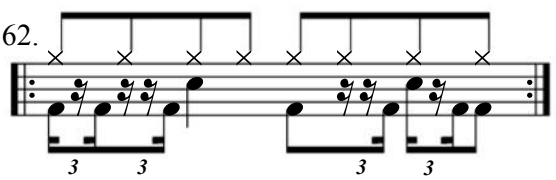

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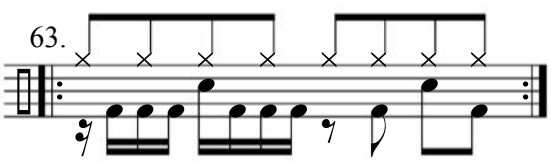

A A D A A D L L

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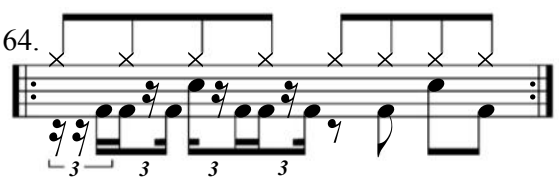

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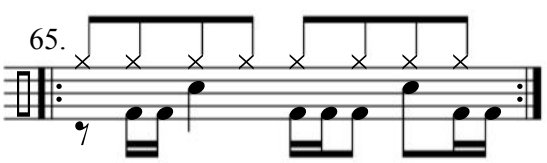

A D A A D A D

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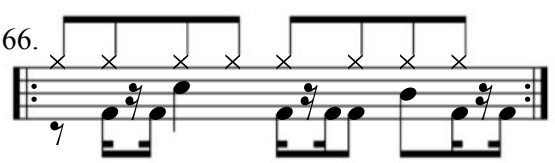

L L L A D L L

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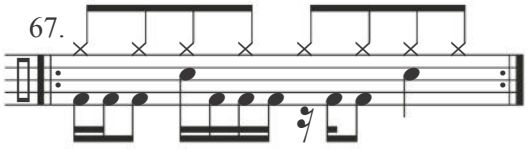

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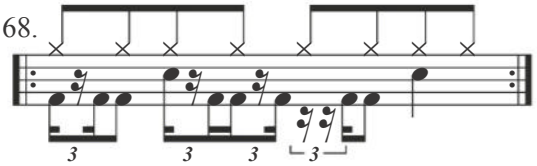

L A D A D L A D

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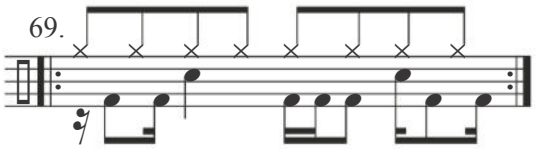

L L A A D L L

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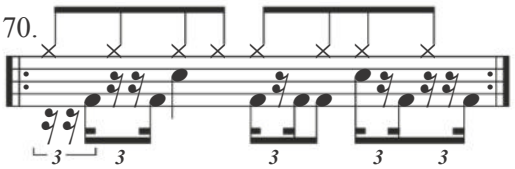

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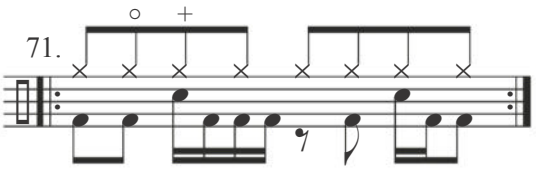

L L A A D L A D

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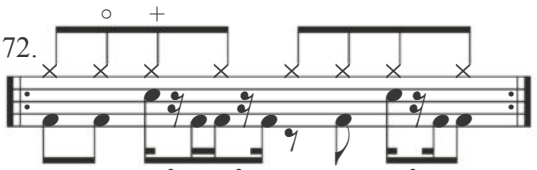
L L A D L L A D

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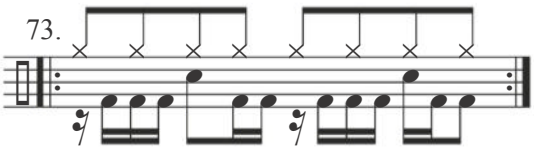

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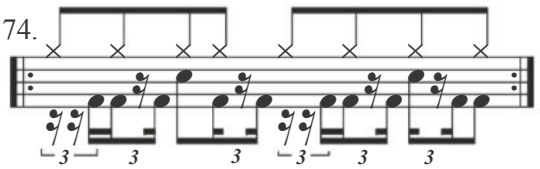

A D L L L AD L A D

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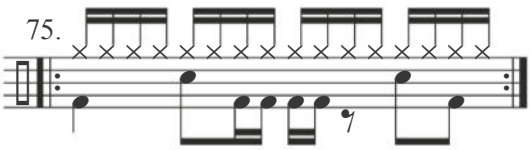

L A A A D L

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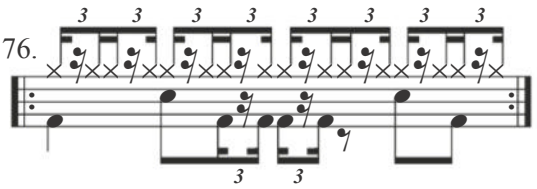

L L A D L L

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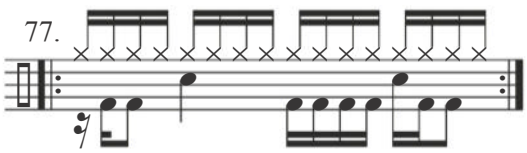

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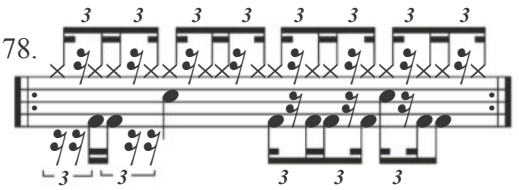

AD L AD L AD

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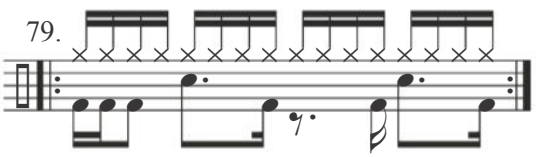

A A D L L A

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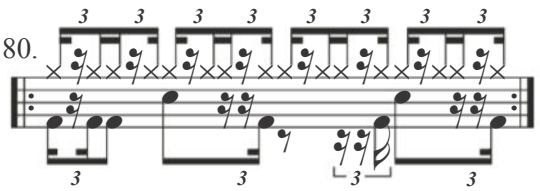


L A D L L A

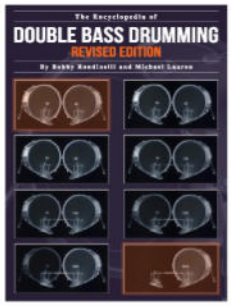
(D)

Check out Michael's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *The Bass Drum Owners Manual* at moderndrummer.com

The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming

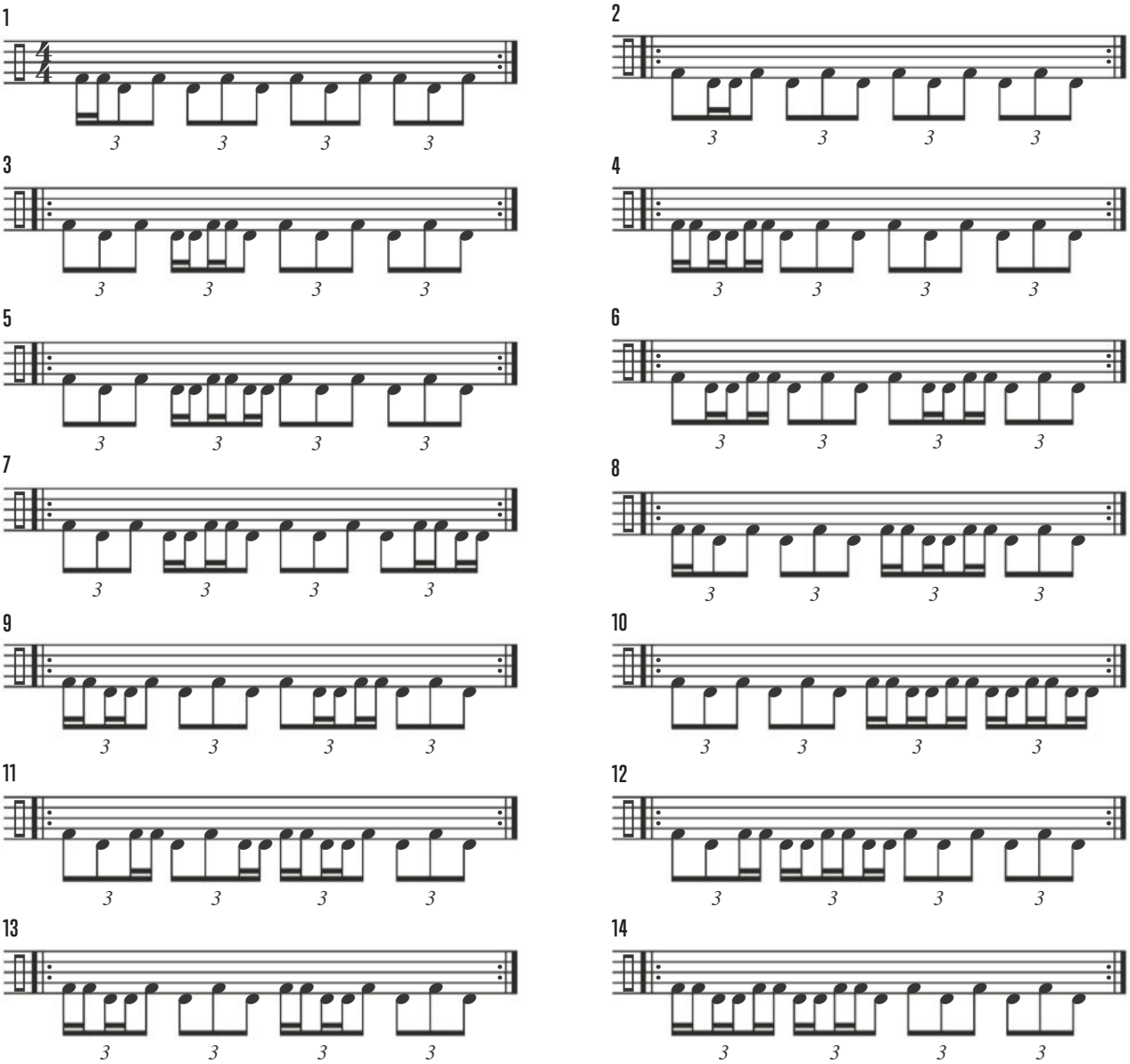
Feet Only—Triplets

By Bobby Rondinelli



In the new and revised edition of the *Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming,* Bobby Rondinelli includes nine new double bass drumming chapters. The new and expanded edition covers contemporary techniques such as bass drum double strokes, feet-only exercises, binary and ternary rhythms, "skiplets", beat turnarounds, the "ladder", and playing doubles with the hands while playing singles with the feet. These concepts will challenge your playing while expanding your double bass vocabulary. If practiced with intention and diligence, this material will help to prepare you for the demands of today's music. This material is advanced, but completely attainable for anyone who has completed the previous chapters in the book. This month you will be dropping 16th note triplet doubles into an eighth note triplet pattern.

-Remember your balance, stay centered.
-Posture is very important— don't lean forward or backwards.
-Start slowly and work your way up.



Check out Bobby's *Modern Drummer* profile pages and get your copy of *The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming* at moderndrummer.com

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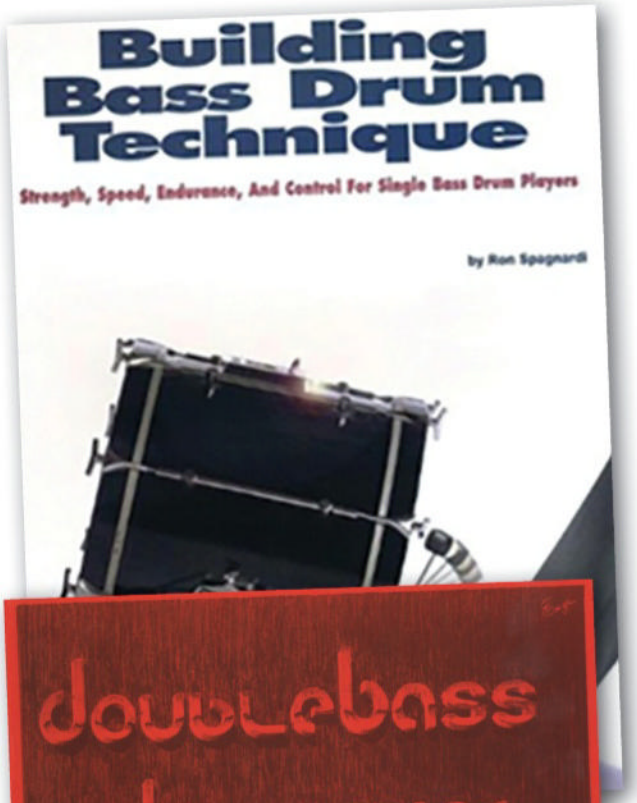
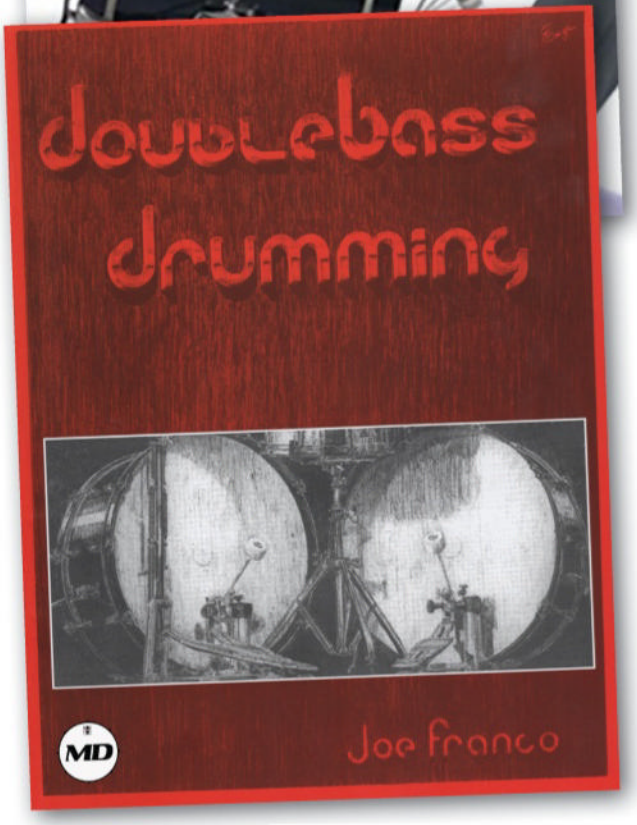
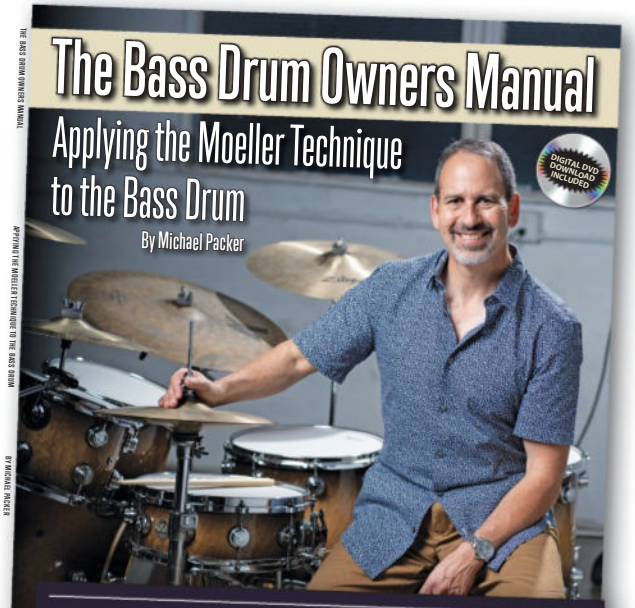
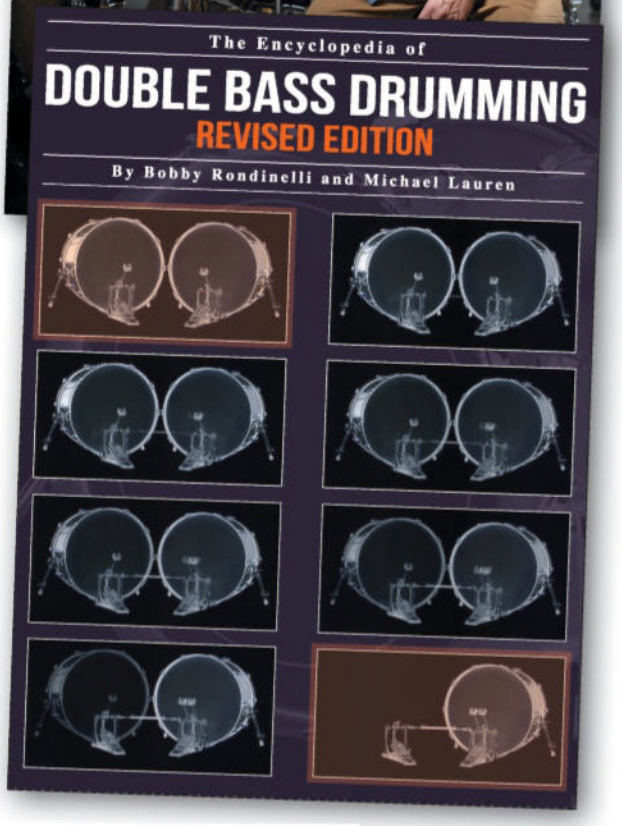
Lessons From The Greats

Bass Drum Technique Books









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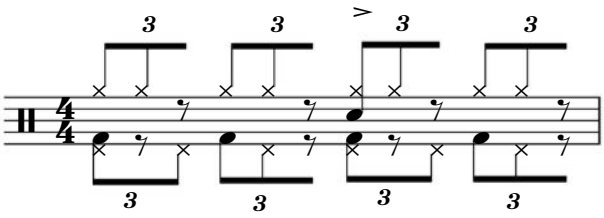
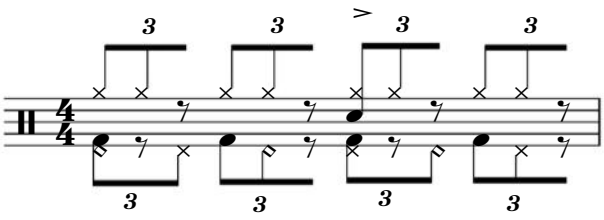
African and American Combinations

By Jonathan Jospeh

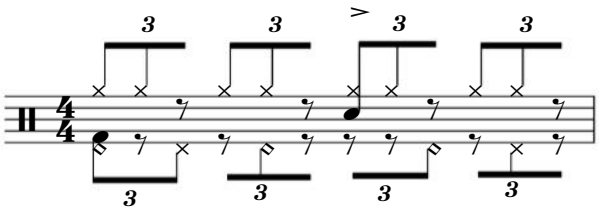
The next step in our African-American journey is to combine the long-three polyrhythm in bikutsi with mangambe and shuffle-funk elements. Let's begin by playing the mangambe right-hand pattern on the cymbal and the six over four polyrhythm with the foot on the hi-hat.



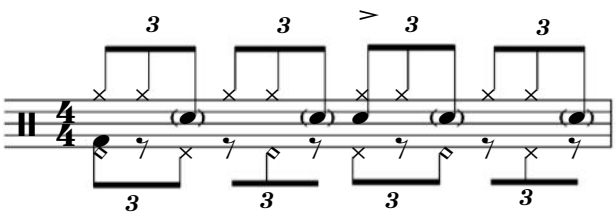
Next, splash the hi-hat on every other note to create the long-three feel.



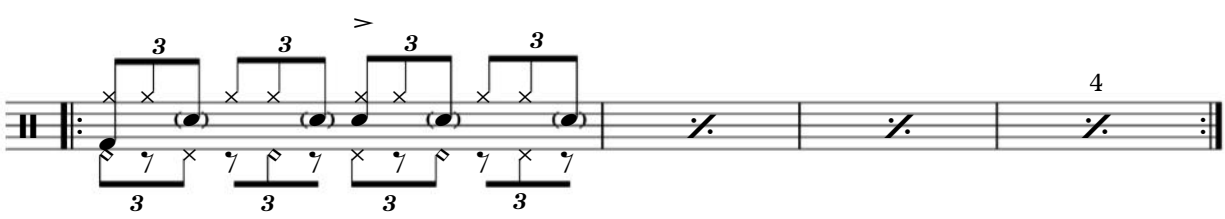
If you simplify the bass drum, you get a simpler shuffle-funk groove.

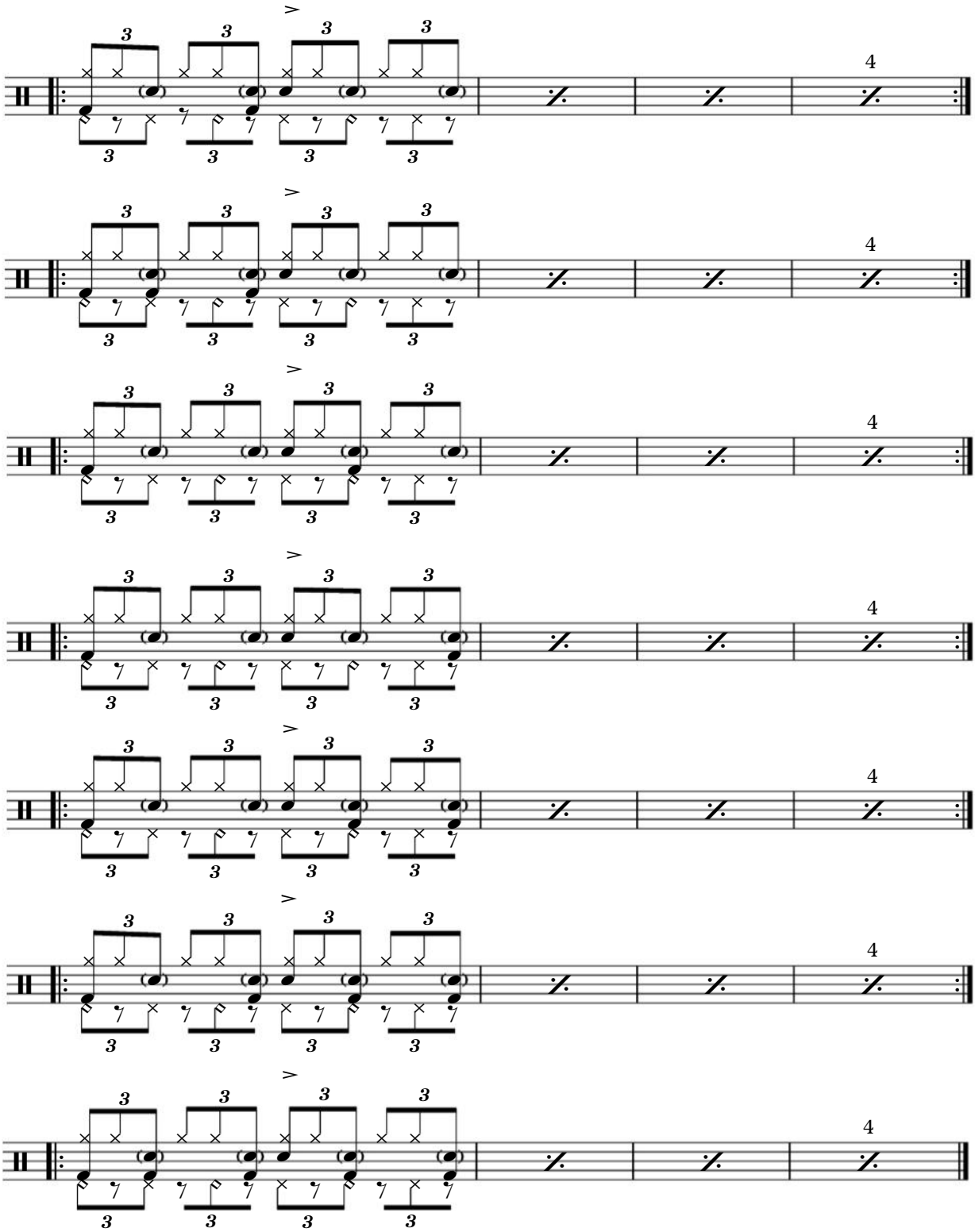


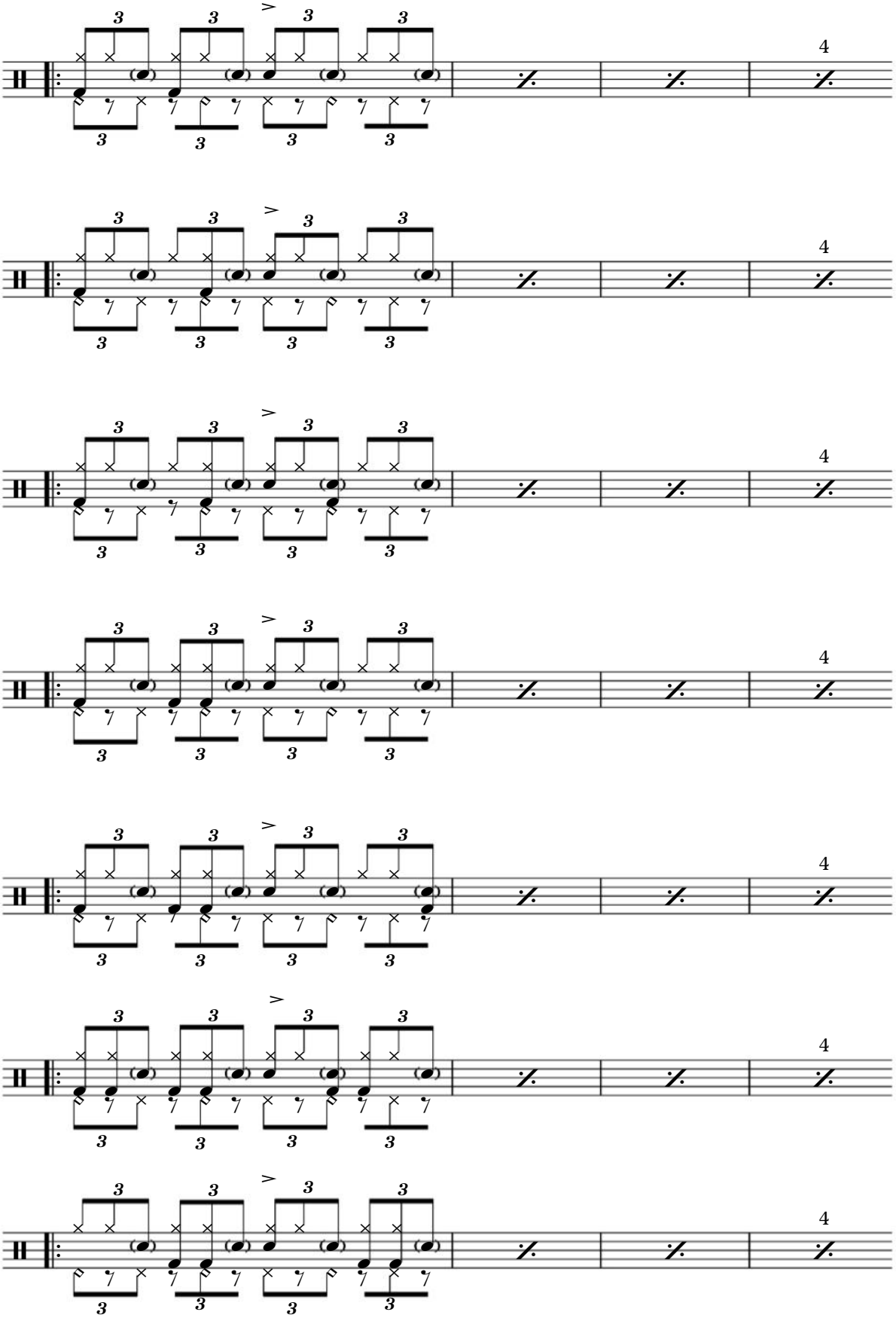
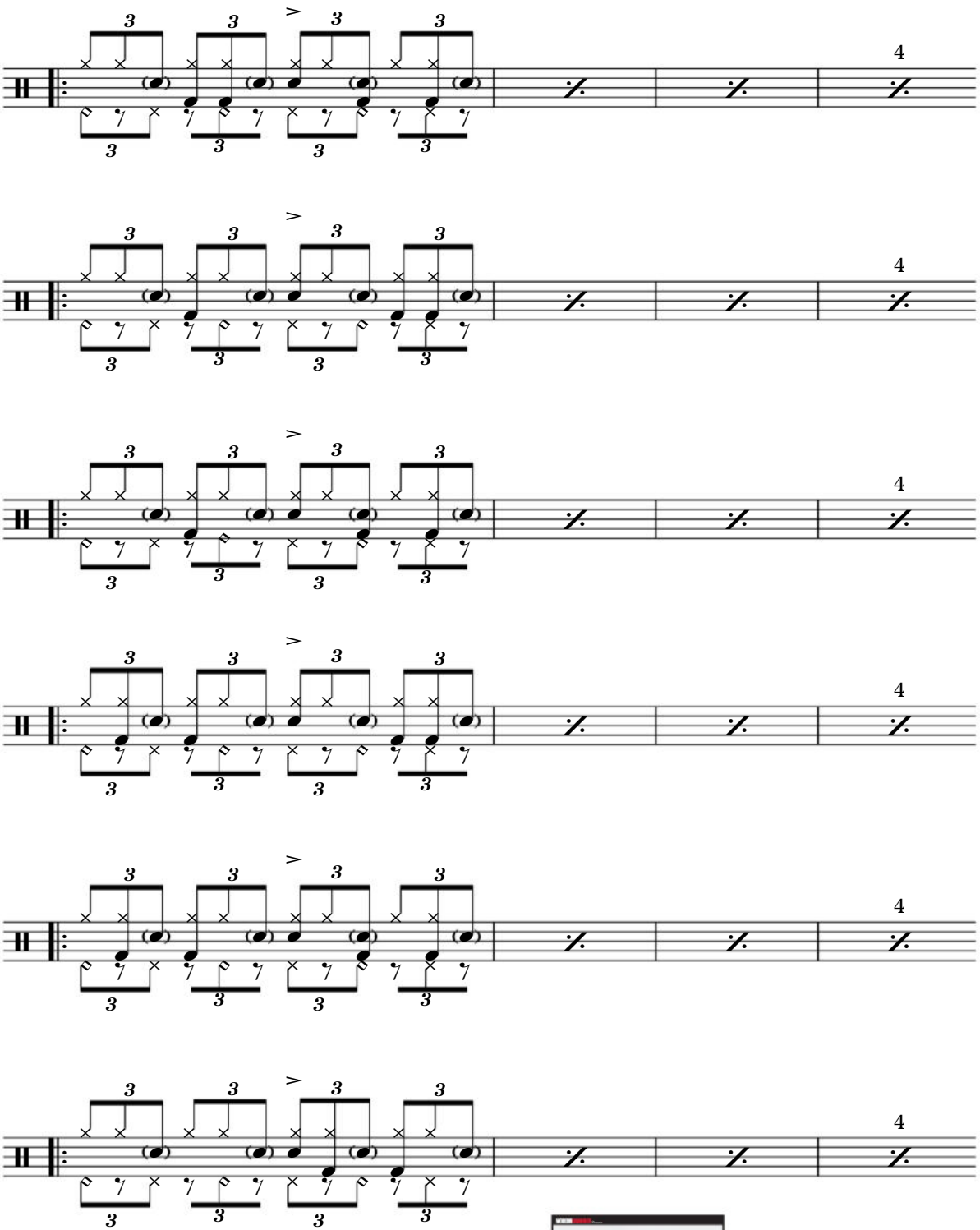
Here's the same groove with ghost notes added on the snare.

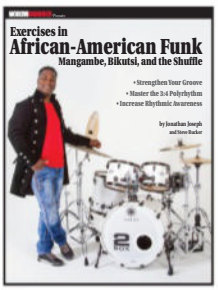


Here are the previous shuffle-funk bass drum patterns combined with the mangambe/bikutsi elements.





Finally, here are the same elements combined with the mangambe bass drum patterns.





Check out Jonathan's drummer profile page and get your copy of *Exercises in African-American Funk* at moderndrummer.com

"Chapinism" to Jazz Solos

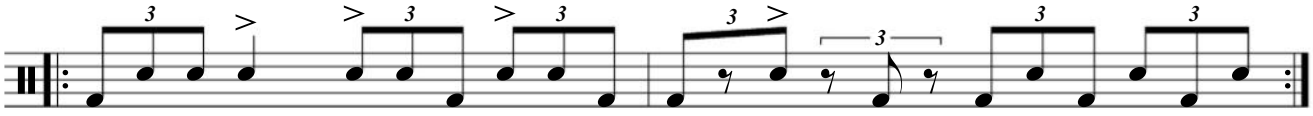
Solo applications from *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer, Vol 1 Coordinated Independence*

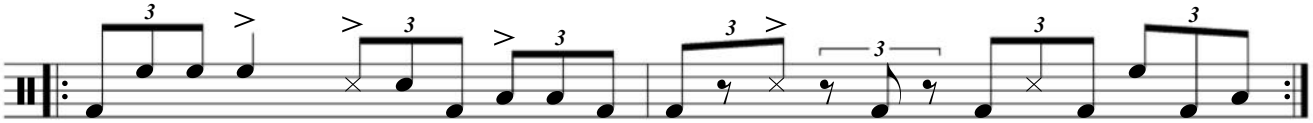
By Stephane Chamberland, inspired by Jim Chapin

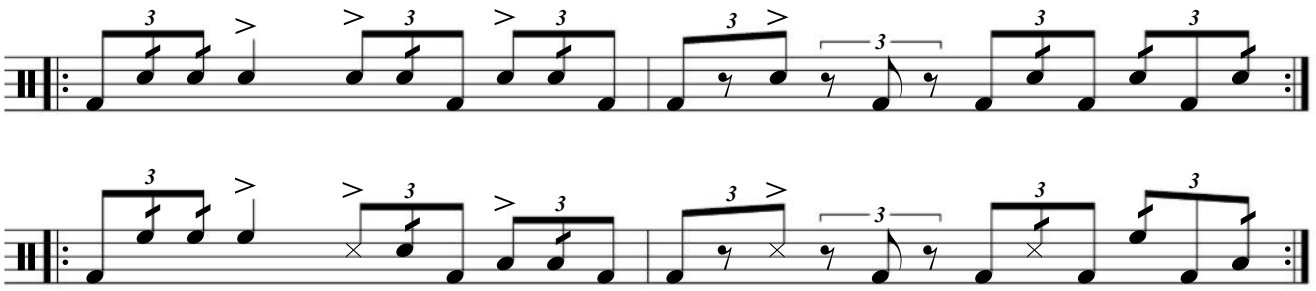
I had the chance to study with the great Jim Chapin during the last four years of his life. Jim passed away at 90 years of age on Independence Day (July 4, 2009). Ironically, he has been referred to as the 'Father of Independence' in the drumming world. After my four years of intense study with Dom Famularo, during a lesson he suddenly said, "Steph, you are now ready for Jim Chapin!" He picked up the phone and called Jim. Jim came and we started our first lesson. It was moving to watch him having a hard time getting out of his car, yet impressive to see him sit at the practice pad and play like he was still 20 years old. From that day, almost every month I was in Long Island taking lessons with Jim. We did technique on the pad for a long time, and ended up on the drumset working on some jazz ideas and independence. Jim wrote the amazing book *Advanced Techniques for The Modern Drummer, Volume One* and *Volume Two* and was also the author of the video, *Speed, Control, Power, and Endurance*. Jim was Sanford Augustus Moeller's (1886–1960)) best student, and after his studies Jim traveled the world teaching Moeller's concepts to many of the world's best drummers.

In this article, I'll show you my personal application of Jim's first book. I came up with this idea while I was looking for a method to improve my vocabulary in solos and trading (4's, 8's, etc.) in jazz music. I felt my level of comping was much higher than my level of soloing. One day, I found the amazing book, *The Philly Joe Jones Solo Book* (transcribed by Joerg Eckel), at Steve Maxwell's Vintage Drum Shop in New York City. I became really inspired to work on solos, and to find ways to incorporate the comping vocabulary from Chapin into my phrases inspired by Philly Joe Jones.

Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer Page 41.
Removing the Ride Cymbal

Let's begin with page 41, numbers five and six. That's one of my favorite pages to start with when demonstrating this concept. Start by playing the patterns as written without the ride cymbal. The first two bars are a great start. Make sure to use a sticking that feels comfortable. Because both hands are playing the phrase now, the sticking possibilities are numerous. Try to alternate hands as much as possible. You will notice the conversation between the snare and the bass drum happening. Already we've got fodder for tremendous jazz drum solos. It's harder to play leaving more space. It's important to practice soloing without always filling-in the spaces in between our ideas. In other words, be as confident with the rests as with the actual played notes. Sing what you play and it will help you to connect more with the musical side of your composition.

Using One Hand and Displacing Around the Drums

John Riley gave me a great piece of advice to improve my technique and get more ideas out of one single pattern. "Play it with just one hand!" he said. That's exactly what we are going to do here. It will help you work on endurance, precision, and movement around the drums. Go slowly and start on the snare, then move between two drums and finally, go everywhere you want from hi tom to floor tom, from floor tom to hi tom, and create random combinations. In this second step, you can hear the melodies created by the notes of your drums. I'll also use some stick-on-stick strokes which are very common in Jazz. Here is one possibility.

Including Double Stroke Rolls

Now it's time to fill in the spaces. This will allow you to sound really big. Double stroke rolls are so important when it comes to feel and getting a fuller sound. In this next step, we will change all the singles that are not accented into double stroke rolls. The accented singles are going to stay accented. Make sure to play the doubles soft and the accents loud to create dynamics. You may also want to place the accents on cymbals or on toms but just staying on the snare is an option that also sounds good.

Putting Phrases Together

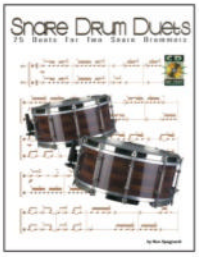
Now you can have fun doing the same thing with all the pages of the book. Some patterns will feel and sound better, so you can write down the best ones in a journal. Then, take your favorite bars and put them together in a jazz context. Use some play along tracks and find musicians to play with. I recommend practicing these ideas as trades. Start by trading 4 bars, 8 bars, 12 bars, 2 bars and even 1 bar. If you are by yourself without music you can play time in between your phrase. When you play time, stay light with the comping, and focus more on the sound of the jazz ride cymbal. Make music and have fun!

For more information visit **www.stephanechamberland.com**

Check out Stephane's *Modern Drummer* profile page at moderndrummer.com

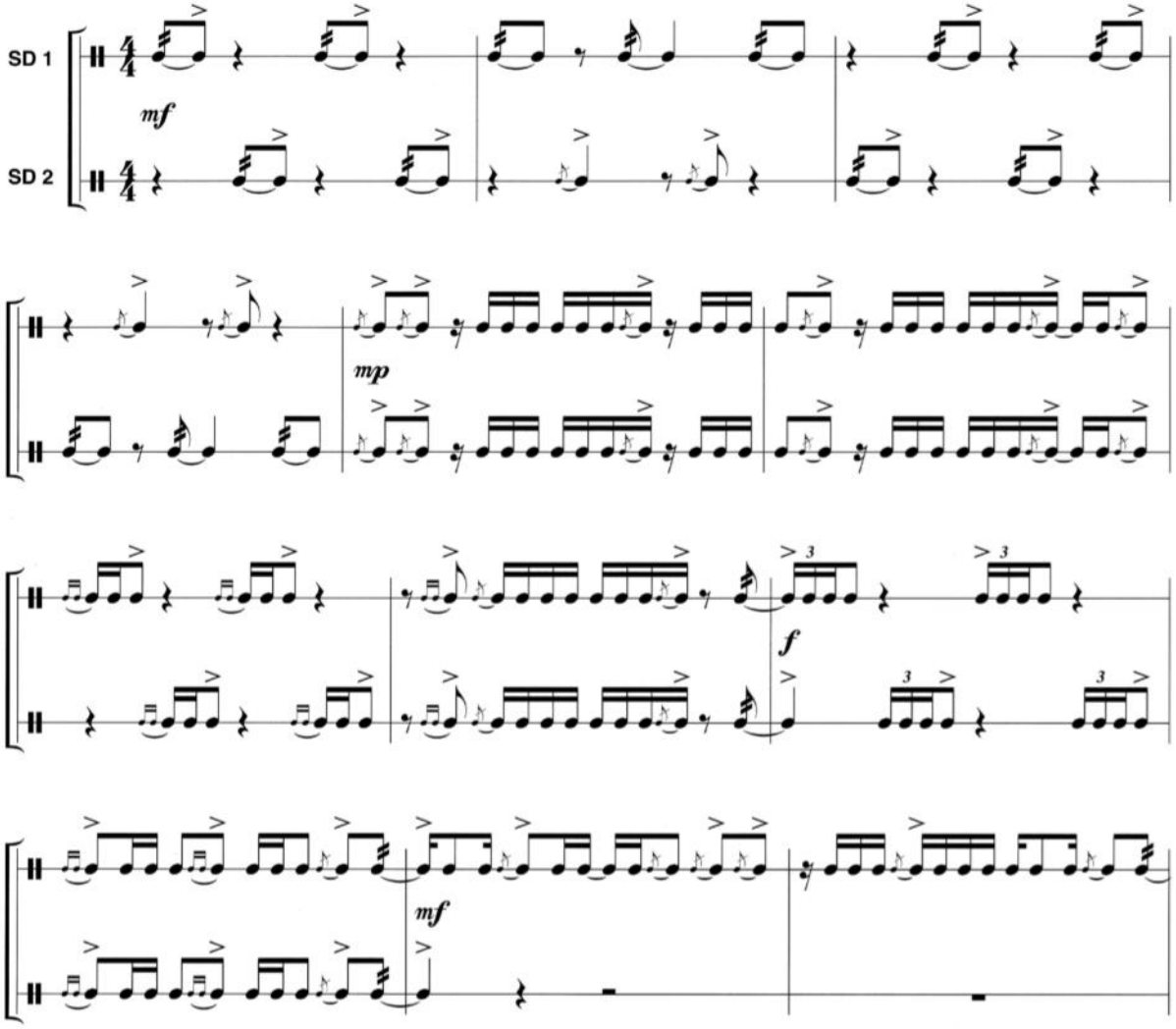
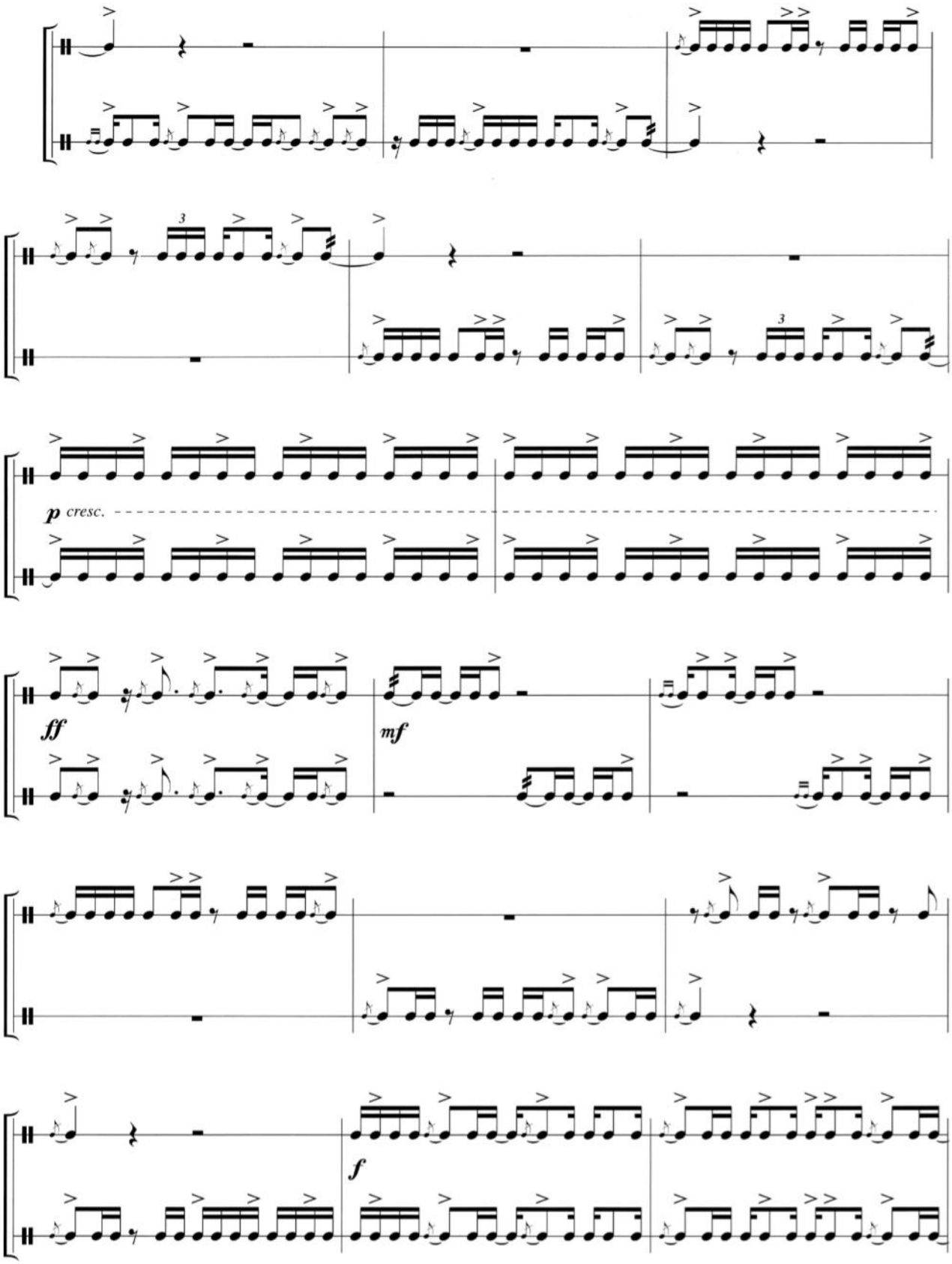
Snare Drum Duets

Duet 3

By Ron Spagnardi

Ron Spagnardi wrote a terrific book called *Snare Drum Duets: 25 Duets For Two Snare Drummers.* It offers a selection of 25 challenging duets that range in difficulty from relatively simple to more complex. A wide assortment of time signatures is used throughout the book, from 2/4 and common time to 5/8, 7-8, and 12/8, among others. These snare drum duets can be used in several different ways.

For those working with the book without the benefit of a second player, snare drum parts one and two can be practiced as individual solos for improvement of basic reading skills. Two players may use the book as written in duet format, remembering to alternate parts.

The metronome marking above each duet indicates the suggested speed at which the material should be performed. However, the tempo can be adjusted up or down in accordance with the ability of the players. Obviously precise execution and perfect timing are essential on the part of both players when performing the material in duet format.

Conscientious practice of the material in *Snare Drum Duets* will most definitely improve both reading and technical skills, regardless of the manner in which the book is utilized. This month's "Duet 3" is an intermediate duet that starts with a nice question and answer of rolls, and includes some nice sixteenth note and flam phrases. Have fun!

Check out Ron's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Snare Drum Duets* at moderndrummer.com

Two 1930s Slingerland Green Trap Kits

By Tim Northup

Here's a little history of how Slingerland got into the drum business. In the 1920's the banjo was very popular in music of day. Up until 1927 Slingerland was a banjo company. Ludwig had been a drum company since 1909. Ludwig and Slingerland were both in Chicago and both used calf skin heads on their drums and banjos. They were always in competition for the best hides from the Chicago stock yards, this is where the rivalry begins!

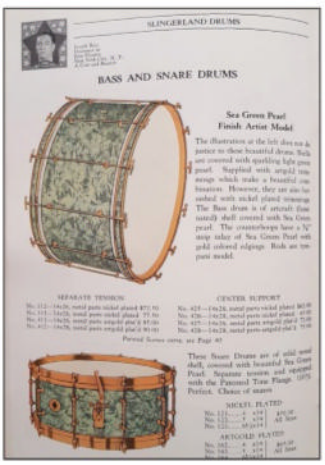
In the mid 1920s Ludwig decided to get into the banjo business. This was a big mistake. The popularity of the banjo was beginning to wane and the losses from the banjo production added to the financial problems and forced Ludwig to sell the company to Conn in 1929. Slingerland saw the decreased sales of banjos and decided to get into the drum business and purchased the Liberty Drum Company's manufacturing equipment which proved to be a very good move. They released their first catalog in 1928 featuring a full line of drumkits, snare drums, marching drums, traps, and accessories. They only grew from there. The end of the 1920's saw the Slingerland Banjo and Drum Company emerge as the largest family-owned drum manufacturer at that time.

Let's take a closer look at these two early and RARE Slingerland drum kits. First, what makes a drum from this era rare or desirable? I base that determination on a few things, finish, condition, the type of set, and if the snare and bass started life together, or was it a pieced together set? These two sets fit the criteria, both are rare finishes and came together complete as kits.

In 1925 George Way of the Leedy

Drum Company is credited with being the first to wrap drums in a pyralin. The first wraps were referred to as "American Pyroxylin" and by 1927 as "Dupont Pyralin". Before this, drums were only offered in natural stain or painted lacquer finishes in black and white. Sea Green Pearl is a rare pyralin wrap that is highly sought after by collectors today. Ludwig had its version called Emerald Pearl, and Leedy's version was called Green Pearl. These wraps were introduced in 1928.

This 1928-30 Sea Green Pearl set consists of a 5x14 Artist Model solid maple shell snare drum, equipped with 10 lugs, nickel plated hardware, and a tone flange. A tone flange is a flat metal ring that sits under the batter head on the shell to eliminate ring and overtones. This was "banjo technology" applied to the snare drum. The bass drum is a 14x28 Artist Model with separate tension nickel plated hardware. Included is a Slingerland Epic bass drum pedal, cymbal clanger and external bass drum tone control (muffler.) A very rare Slingerland Duncan Sock Cymbal Pedal and Epic hi-hat with 10" cup cymbals are also pictured. Other accessories include three Chinese toms with holders, a set of temple blocks, two Zildjian cymbals, a wood block and cowbells.

The other set is a 1934 Slingerland

"Hollywood Outfit" in original Sparkling Green wrap complete with all the original factory accessories. A version of this set is shown on the cover of the 1934 catalog. It features a 5x14 Artist model solid snare drum, 10 lugs, nickel plated hardware, and an internal tone control (this was the first year for this.) The bass drum is a 14x28 Artist Model with single tension nickel plated hardware. Like the first set, a Slingerland Epic bass drum pedal, cymbal clanger, and external bass drum tone control (muffler) are included. One of the rarest items on this set is the side trap table, also in sparkling green. As of this writing, this the only Slingerland side table of this kind known to exist. The set also has the original "new era" cymbal holder with a Alejian 13" cymbal. Included are a Chinese tom, and Chinese large tom with holder, wood block, and cowbell. On the trap table is a rare pair of Gladstone hand cymbals made by Frank Wolf, NYC. These were popular in the 1930's as sound effects used by the greats like Chick Webb and Zutty Singleton.

There are two very rare items shown with this kit, a Roy Duncan Sock cymbal pedal and the Duplex After Beat Drum. These were inventions made to accent the "after beat" that was popular in 1930's dance music. The Duplex After Beat Drum is one of the rarest "contraptions" that was made by the Duplex drum company and sold by Slingerland in their first catalog in 1928. It is a 14" frame drum with a calf skin head played by a pedal holding a pair of brushes to strike the head. Talking to collectors, outside of this one there may only be a couple of these known to exist. The #1468 Duncan Cymbal Sock was sold by Slingerland from 1932-36. It was replaced by a #1114 pressed steel model, sold from 1934-38. Both of these items were "fads" that did not last long and were quickly replaced by the standard hi-hat like the ones we know today.

If you would like to see and play these kits, make an appointment today to visit the Northup Drums Museum in Oneonta, NY and visit us at **www.northupdrums.com**

Ron Spagnardi

1943-2003

Remembered After Twenty Years

It was twenty years ago this month that *Modern Drummer* Founder and Publisher Ron Spagnardi succumbed from his battle with cancer. Although Ron wasn't comfortable with the term "visionary," that's exactly what he was. Every drummer around the world owes a debt of gratitude to Ron Spagnardi. The creation of *Modern Drummer Magazine* unified drummers and gathered the drum industry into one monthly meeting place; between the covers of "The World's Most Widely Read Drum Magazine."

It was in those pages that we all read and learned about new drummers, established pros, and drumming legends. But it wasn't just about the drummers, it was also the art of drumming from legendary teachers and instructors like Joe Morello, Gary Chester, Rod Morgenstein, David Garibaldi, John Riley, and Billy Ward. *Modern Drummer* was the readers' conduit to their favorite drummers with the monthly *Ask a Pro* department, and questions about the industry and drumming in general with *It's Questionable* and *Reader's Platform*. Ron's own *Editors' Overview* was always a highlight for his personal take on the drum issues of the day. The family of the drum industry united behind Ron's new venture and created flashy ads for new products and ad campaigns that coordinated with Ron's singular vision. Those ads, and *Modern Drummer* product reviews, fueled the appetite of generations of drummers inspiring countless trips to local music stores and drum shops for drummers young and old. *Modern Drummer* didn't just represent the drum industry, it was the drum industry. The drum industry became so expansive that Ron created a separate magazine in 1993 called *Drum Business* dedicated exclusively to the business of drumming and drums.

Spagnardi started as a drummer playing the New York City Jazz Clubs and playing jazz and dance and gigs throughout the region, he was a musician at heart. Before founding *Modern Drummer,* he ran a drum teaching studio. His teaching led to his authoring of twelve in-depth instructional books that were published by *Modern Drummer*. The success of MD demanded more space and knowledgeable staff which led *Modern Drummer's* offices to move from the basement of Ron's house in Nutley, NJ, to various larger locations through Northern NJ, and eventually to a massive custom-built headquarters in Cedar Grove, NJ. Throughout the many moves, Ron took and kept the original light fixture and bulb from his basement in Nutley as a reminder of his early days and his original vision.

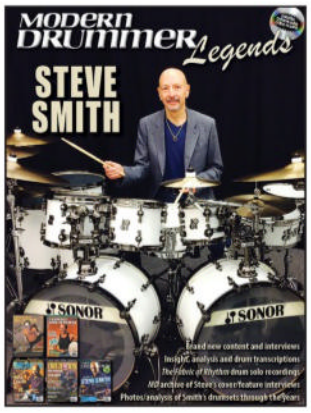
For 27 years, Ron ran the successful business of publishing drum magazines and instructional books, which led to producing the Modern Drummer Drum Festival which started in 1987. The MD Festival became the centerpiece of the year in drumming attracting drummers and drum industry leaders from around the world for a weekend of inspiration and celebration with a special family reunion type atmosphere.

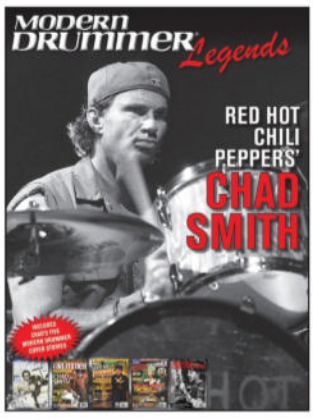
Twenty years after his passing, Ron's absence is still felt in the drumming industry and the world of drumming. Ron promoted the dream of drumming, he helped inspire, create, promote, and document a growing industry through his hard work, relaxed business acumen, honesty, engaging sincerity, and his love and commitment to modern drumming.

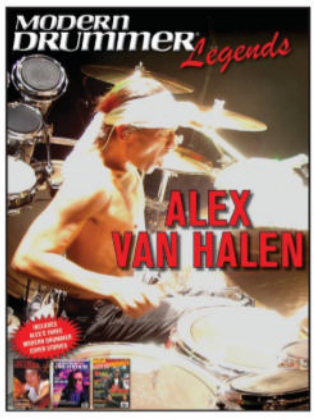
— Mark Griffith

MODERN DRUMMER

The *Legends* Collection







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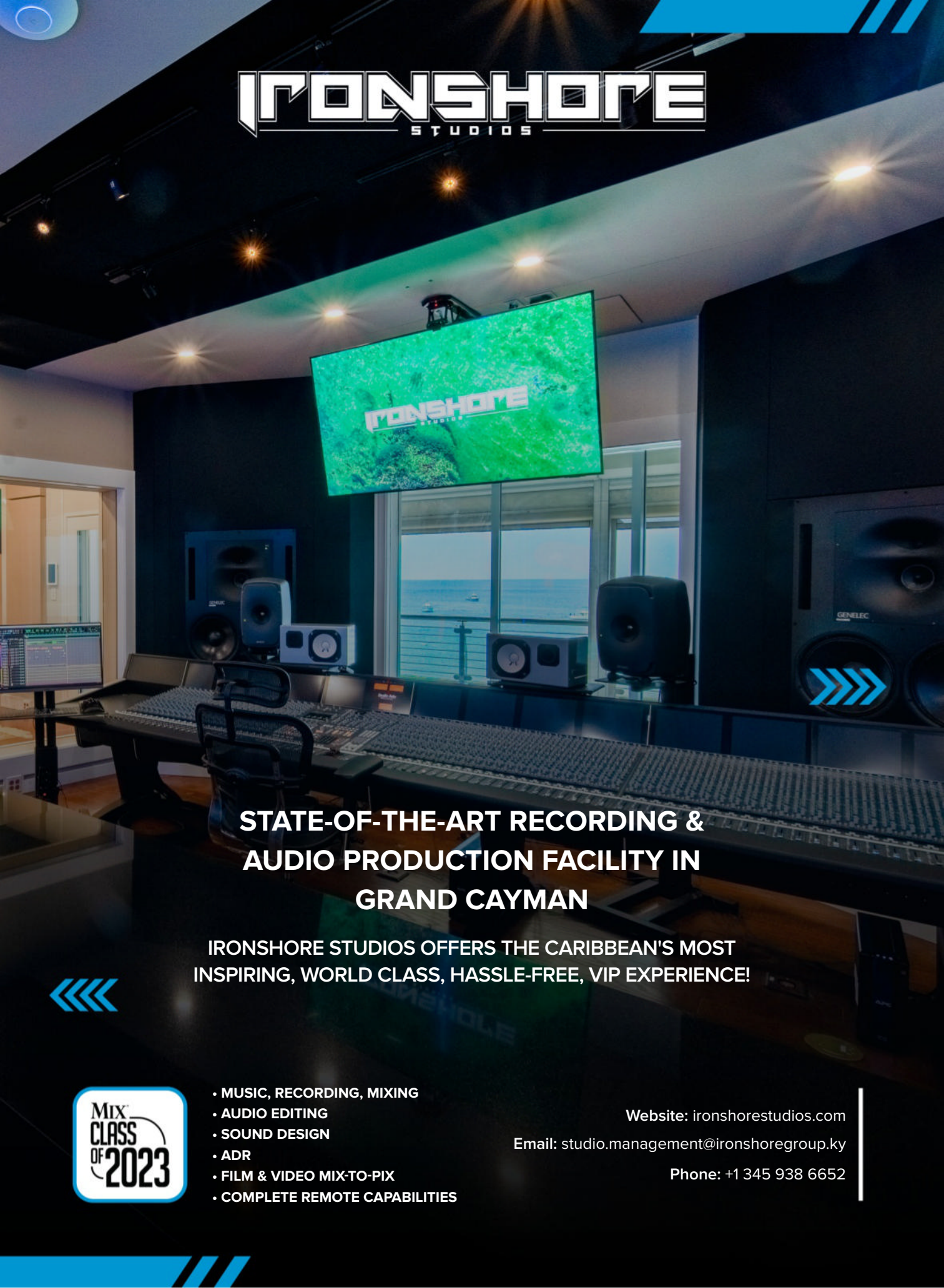
Vinnie Paul Replica Pearl "Damage Plan Kit,"

This month's Eye Candy kit is a Pearl set that was custom created by John Douglas. This is a replica of Vinnie Paul's Damage Plan kit. The kit features two 24 x 26 bass drums, 14 x 14 and 15 x 15 rack toms, 18 x 18 floor tom, and an 8 x14 snare drum. John Douglas custom made this kit for the Modern Drummer Hall of Fame museum in South Florida. This is one of only two of these sets that John Douglas made. Vinnie Paul's original set resides in the Hard Rock Cafe in the Universal Orlando resort. Everything on the kit was hand painted and the drums were covered in barbed wire as per Vinnie Paul's request.

Photos by Felipe Laverde



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